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Ethics and Ecologies:
Negotiating Responsible and Sustainable Business in Ireland

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation is about the development of corporate responsibility and sustainability advocacy in Ireland. It shows how the biopolitics of corporate responsibility (or CR) and sustainability was rendered—by CR advocates and interested companies—as an ethical ecology, not dissociated from the biopolitical but rooted in it. By 'ecology' I mean to refer to the growing consciousness and deliberate cultivation of the interconnections, dependencies and feedback as well as responsibilities between heretofore discreet parts of the social landscape—between business and employees for example. These nascent interconnections—between what we might think of as systems and their environment—were also being presented as compelling ethical striving and to an extent, facilitating it. Importantly this effort was to be directed towards what was coming to be understood by the terms 'sustainability' and 'responsible business.' Hence, I also used the word 'ecology' in the sense of how this argument for ethics had roots in concern for the planet itself and for the very survival of the human race. In a deeper sense then, the matrix or the features of biopower—"[1] one or more truth discourses about the 'vital' character of living human beings; [2] an array of authorities considered competent to speak that truth; [3] strategies for intervention upon collective existence in the name of life and health; [4] and modes of subjectification, in which individuals work on themselves in the name of individual or collective life or health" (Rabinow and Rose 2006, 195)—permeated this concern with sustainability (the ecology or the engagement of systems and environments in the name of '*life*' as such) and certainly as it was rendered in this arena of business and all that surrounds it, sustainability weighed heavily on ethical quest or government of the self for its potential for success. Furthermore, these logics could be extended into the less biological concern with the sustainability of our *ways* of life—including communities, businesses and markets; as proxies for vital human bodies, they too were at risk and dependent on changed dispositions to action for their durability.

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Contents

Introduction

This dissertation is about the development of corporate responsibility and sustainability advocacy in Ireland by one particular NGO with whom I spent my fieldwork and by the companies that they work with.

In theoretical terms, as I will explain in detail shortly, this dissertation is broadly about how the biopolitics (Foucault 1988 [1976], 139) of corporate responsibility (or CR) and sustainability became rendered—by CR advocates and interested companies—as an ethical ecology, not dissociated from the biopolitical but rooted in it. By ecology, I mean to refer to the sense of a growing consciousness and a deliberate cultivation of the interconnections, dependencies and feedback as well as responsibilities between heretofore discreet parts of the social landscape—between business and employees for example. In other words I refer to processes within and between systems and their environment that were being presented as compelling ethical striving. But I also mean an ecology in the sense of how this argument for ethics had roots in concern for the planet and humans' biological dependency on it that, like a contagion, then extended to the less biological concern with the sustainability of our *ways of life*—including economies and communities.

To explain this requires that I touch on a range of concepts—namely: responsibility, sustainability, neoliberalism and liberalism, biopolitics, ethics, and ecology while also explaining a little of how I conducted fieldwork or how this dissertation is organized.

BFR, a pseudonym I chose to mean 'Business for Responsibility,' is where I conducted fieldwork as an intern. The organization recruits and prompts a network of companies who each support BFR through an annual fee, to think about their responsibilities to a wide-range of stakeholders. BFR's argument is decidedly not for pure altruism: companies should not be more responsible because it's 'good' but because in a vein of enlightened self-interest, it is both good for their stakeholders or "the right thing to do" as BFR's chief executive often said *and* good for the longevity of each company's business.

Without giving so many details as to reveal the identity of the organization, BFR comprised approximately 10 consultants who worked one to one with companies, progressing each of their corporate responsibility practices. The consultants' backgrounds were varied, a mixture of rural and urban, Irish and foreign. Some had worked with well respected NGOs. Others were former business people. Some had come to corporate responsibility as students from newly emerging sustainable development programs among others. The majority—as was typical of CR in Ireland—were female.

On a daily basis the consultants worked with their assigned clients, advising on how to progress internal programs to do with Workplace, Marketplace, Environment or Community practices. At the same time each of the consultants had a specific expertise linked to one of those categories and as needed to, they enlisted one another for specific discussions with their portfolio of clients. At the same time, they organized seminars and workshops on best-practice in each of these categories.

The primary achievements of the organization included helping companies to understand and change their practices in relation to particular dimensions of their operations. The remainder of the time was spent garnering new developments from elsewhere in Ireland or around the globe and promulgating them at home at specially-organized seminars or in one-to-one advice with clients.

This dissertation describes the advocacy for CR and companies' attempts to adopt corporate responsibility as a philosophy, their coming to recognize it as a viable proposition and the nascent changes that entailed for the company, for the stakeholders involved and for 'business' in the social landscape. Before discussing the structure of the dissertation I would like to briefly discuss the concept of corporate responsibility and another that now sits alongside it—sustainability.

Corporate Responsibility and Sustainability

In BFR the phrase 'corporate responsibility' was always meant to convey a concern with the longevity of business on condition that ecosystems and social fabrics (all of which are symbiotic in the logic of CR and sustainability advocacy) were also maintained. While attempting to make a distinction against 19th and early 20th century philanthropy, CR tends to trace its origin to the Rio Earth Summit that was held following the publication of the so-called Brundtland report (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). That document was a milestone in vaunting the now-famous triad for sustainable development—the interdependency of economy, society and environment—as essential to meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. A video that BFR used to show rolled the timeline as follows:

1989 The fall of the Berlin wall
1992 The Earth Summit or its official title, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992 where world leaders discussed sustainable development.

1995	EU & business leaders agree to fight social exclusion
	CSR Europe is founded
	The UK-based Body Shop publishes a social report
	Shell/Heineken/Nike/Benetton/Renault come under stakeholder or NGO pressure for their business practices
	Cannibals with Forks (Elkington 1998) is published among others
1997	Telecom Italia, BT, Shell, Danone bring out social reports
	EU's Amsterdam treaty and its social and employment strategy
1999	Protests against globalisation and the lack of accountability among financial institutions at the Seattle World Trade Organisation meeting
	Dow Jones Sustainable Reporting Index founded which rates companies on social and environmental criteria
	UN forms the World Economic Forum
2000	BFR formed
	EU leaders meeting at Lisbon Summit appeal to business leaders to take up the challenge of corporate responsibility
	First European business convention on CSR in Brussels that launches a European campaign on CSR
2002	Trinity College Dublin joins the European Academy of Business in Society (EABIS)
	European Commission publishes communication on CSR
	World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg – launching voluntary partnerships to support the development of
2003	'Building Trust' is the theme at the World Economic Forum in Davos

However during fieldwork it was as if 'corporate responsibility' was at risk of being replaced by the term 'sustainability.' Primarily the latter word conjured the biological doom resulting from industrial development. The 2007 report from the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC 2007) seemed to 'prove' for the first time that the climate was changing catastrophically due to human activities. During fieldwork in several corporate settings I was impressed by the depth with which the threat of the future end was felt. Usually corporate executives are portrayed as having little stock in the fate of say, the local river. Among those that I met, typically the concern was accompanied by a determination to do something about it. Sustainability would also redirect that very modern word 'progress' back to a path of positive interventions.

In parallel at that time there was an interest in moving past the history and the guilt that responsibility represented. Two interlocutors who had thought about it in detail, articulated the preference for the word ‘sustainability’ in such a way that the past and its associated sentiments (with which they associated ‘responsibility’) should be less of a focus, backgrounded behind the present serving the future. By their telling, each of sustainability and corporate responsibility encapsulated different relationships to time and sentiment.

As one interlocutor that I call Frankie (a corporate responsibility executive) told it, originally companies were not motivated by optimism when they embarked on corporate responsibility initiatives but rather by the critiques of environment and community activists. In her view such an outlook came to be seen as an obstacle to companies truly embracing the spirit of CR, treating it as something they *had* to do, thus typically equating CR with the cowering distribution of checks to good causes rather than actually changing how they did their business.

I am mindful too of the particular flavor that Nietzsche adds to the concept of responsibility in the *Genealogy of Morals* (1997) and how it echoes Frankie’s perception of the word. According to Nietzsche, in a decidedly sarcastic tone, to become responsible was to make oneself “calculable, regular, necessary, even to his own mind, so that finally he would be able to vouch for himself as future, in the way that someone making a promise does!” (40). That capacity was built upon conscience and memory. “The proud knowledge of this extraordinary privilege of responsibility, the consciousness of this rare freedom, this power over oneself and over fate has sunk down into his innermost depths and has become an instinct, a dominant instinct—what will he call it, this dominant instinct, assuming that he needs a name for it? About that there can be no doubt: this sovereign man calls it his conscience...” (41-42).

In defense of what CSR *was supposed* to *mean*, Frankie did recognize that the ambition was for it to rid itself of its original narrow connotations of (guilty) environmental remediation and community ‘giving’. This had driven the dropping of the word ‘social’ to change the concept from CSR or corporate *social* responsibility into ‘corporate responsibility’. The ambition was to make people understand the benefits of CR to the company as a philosophy guiding management decisions towards the best interests of ALL stakeholders, including shareholders. But then the word ‘sustainability’ came in to its own.

For a while and still to an extent, ‘sustainability’ offered a fresh start in conceptual terms where the connected concerns of companies and stakeholders were bared, not buried, and directed at a positive future. It would allow companies to achieve, a “long-term, meaningful and mutually beneficial relationship between business and its key stakeholders; one that enables [companies] to address critical local and international challenges and to ensure the future health and wealth of the Irish economy, society and environment” (Irish Business and Employers’ Confederation 2008, 4).

Political, economic and social support for sustainability grew. Just as for CR, but much more present in the word as a synonym for survival, at stake was the morbidity of business and of the planet unless companies stopped operating and producing products as they had been. Such radical change would require urgent stakeholder collaboration. The symbiosis between companies, everyday life and the physical environment and the degree to which they could and needed to influence each other, became even more emphatic and urgent. It is difficult to argue with the logic of sustainability.

Yet, in all of this, to get as far as the idea of sustainability the idea of responsibility was still pertinent if one considers how responsibility signals an awareness of and a response to others—a kind of correspondence. Social theory and philosophy support the interpretation that responsibility is broadly speaking a category of correspondence. For instance, Weber's (2004) ethic of responsibility is a reflexive principle that relates one's convictions to the real world and to estimates of consequences. Buber (1970) describes how responsibility is arrived at in the tension *between* what is and how things ought to be (157). Nietzsche (1997) includes in the history of responsibility, the ability "to think in terms of causality, to see and anticipate from afar, to posit ends and means with certainty, to be able above all to reckon and calculate!" (40). Though Derrida's (1995) goal is to draw attention to the philosophical limits within responsibility, for our purposes the essential point is that responsibility is generally theorized as operating as a category of correspondence between say, convictions and consequences, means and ends, what 'is' and what should be—trade-offs or formative differences that are fundamentally still kinds of correspondence.

Essentially the concept nods to something recognizable—a task, a person, a goal, a social fabric, a life-program—something whose success, however delimited, someone comes to view as relevant to one's own convictions as much as the encounter might be also be constitutive of their convictions. Responsibility is already a fundamentally relational word that sits well within the ecology or the web of connections that CR and sustainability are. Sustainability (of the business through business's balanced role in the triad of economy-society-environment—that is, among stakeholders) is highly dependent on responsibility to them.

There is substantial literature in moral philosophy on the relationship between agency and causality as it pertains to an individual (see Fischer 1999 for a comprehensive overview). However there is also a debate as to how such characteristics sit in the responsibility of a corporate entity which is a collective. When a collective does something the argument is that it is actually individual agents who have done it but for the purposes of responsibility the concern is that the action cannot be attributable to both the group agent and the individual. Accordingly, in terms of punishment for irresponsibility, the practical challenge is to identify who is to be held responsible (cf: Wolgast 1992). Indeed Beck (1995) captures this latter problem well in his critique of present-day society and its "organized irresponsibility" whereby "the interpretation of the principle of causation in individual terms, which is the legal foundation for hazard aversion, protects the perpetrators it is supposed to bring to book. It is absurd how an ostensibly protective judicial system, with all its laws and bureaucratic pretentions, almost perfectly transforms collective guilt into general acquittal" (2).

As it happens Pettit (2007), who aligns himself with various others, argues that organizations may satisfy three conditions where it is fitting to hold them responsible (as distinct from successfully punishing them). The conditions are that to be held responsible, one must be an autonomous agent, with access to the information required to make judgments and the control to choose. He argues that these criteria apply to group agents and on the point of agency in particular, argues that a corporate organization can share in the control over what is done "so far as it relates as a programming factor to the implementing factor represented by the active individual" (191). In that sense, *both* the corporate entity and the contributing member will be fit to be held responsible—the latter on three points: "as designers of a group agent, as members of the group or as those who enact its wishes" (193).

As I discuss in Chapter 4 in particular, corporate responsibility done well meant that someone within the business was following their convictions and trying to infect the cultivated personality of the business to also name its convictions, to pay attention to its convictions and to that which could be recognized as relevant to its convictions, and to adjust its behavior accordingly. In that sense, as already stated, corporate responsibility was about correspondences, about a company re-assessing its correspondences as necessary steps to sustainability.

Of course, these connections were sometimes refused. With one interlocutor, I wanted to discuss her activities in terms of the word responsibility but she insisted on describing it as:

> I: ...a project which I've entitled linking "sustainability with business values" and I'm not using the term corporate social responsibility, corporate responsibility or anything like that.
> E: is that, why, can you talk about why that is or
> I: because the term has been demeaned. It's been demeaned because too many people have jumped on the bandwagon and replaced activities and initiatives that are in the marketing area or in other areas... [T]o protect the budgets around those particular initiatives they've moved it into the area of corporate responsibility... I mean I've looked at them and I've watched them over the years and I see... legislative responsibility, compliance issues say around safety, worker safety being dressed up as corporate social responsibility initiative and being put in as for awards. I mean, it's where you go beyond compliance in those areas that I believe you move into this particular scenario. So but apart from that..., there's this, to try and encapsulate the variety of outcomes and the variety of drivers I think that the word sustainability when you look at it, when you're looking at the economic, the social and the environmental bottom lines if you like and this triple bottom line thing,... when you look at the totality of those things and the interactions between them, then you're starting to say well it's

> really about not just about a sustainable society, it's not just about a sustainable environment, but it's also about sustainable business so I think that sustainability over time is a much better descriptor of what we're trying to talk about.

However, while I refer to Corporate Responsibility (or CR), it should be understood by now to include the concern of sustainability and vice versa. Now BFR explicitly describes ideal business practices as responsible *and* sustainable—combining memory with a plan for the future.

Dissertation Structure and Fieldwork

The goal for either concept as a senior BFR executive put it, was that they were philosophies that businesses should adopt—simply a way of doing business. Practically companies were to adopt the philosophy of CR by thinking about four arenas or terms representing four important stakeholder groupings. This was how BFR grouped its advice to them and how it themed particular events. It had expert executives for each of the four topics. The stakeholder groupings identified as relevant to responsible and sustainable business practices were:

1. Environment – the company practices affecting the physical environment to do with preventing pollution, reducing carbon emissions, reducing water use, increasing recycling and so on
2. Workplace – the people that are the company's employees
3. Community—the people representing social issues in and around the company but also further afield. These groups could represent topics as broad as issues for the local elderly, youth, animal welfare, urban regeneration or former drug abusers' rehabilitation

4. Marketplace – the people who are the company's customers, suppliers and peers

My dissertation is organized around chapters on each of these four headings, as was my fieldwork.

This was not a field in a readily identifiable sense. My fieldwork was conducted at an office and in office settings or in cafes or canteens in and around Dublin's businesses primarily. Officially I was a part-time intern whose role it was to assist the topical experts on the four areas above with various tasks—preparing for events, creating databases, helping publish the monthly newsletter by collating stories, editing them and laying them out. I made it my mission to be involved across the organization as broadly as possible, always trying to ensure that I was getting inside the working understanding and practices of these terms "workplace," "marketplace" and so on.

A great deal of my time outside the office was spent at business events—all of which had a similar format even though the address and the theme might be different. Typically short events—an hour to an hour and a half long but with the occasional one or two day conference—began with presentations by the BFR executives, by companies they had invited to present or by other experts from companies overseas. These events were oriented to explaining corporate responsibility by showcasing examples of what other companies were doing around a particular theme. By following the footsteps of the four thematic experts at BFR I met company executives at these events and in what might be called snowball sampling (Bernard 2006, 193) I would invite them to chat with me.

In keeping with purposive sampling (ibid, 189-191) given my interest in 'responsibility' and on 'business' and what the overlapping of these two might mean, I also deliberately sought out (through internet searches, through the networks formed above) and interviewed several experts, including state officials, researchers and religious who could discuss ‘responsibility’ and ‘business’ in terms of Ireland’s competitiveness and Ireland as a place to live and work. Hence another segment of my time outside the office was in attendance at events related to this concern with what I loosely refer to as a “greater good”, or to making each of the four ‘pillars’ contribute to a greater good. By a “greater good” I mean to refer to a generalized anxiety that was tangible in daily conversations, in publications, occasional events, state research efforts (cf. Ratcliffe 2005) and media references that lamented a quality of life and ethos that was considerate of others (as if it had once existed) and that almost without exception would be salved by addressing business or by fixing the ways of life that seemed to be issuing from a nation dominated by the business of the so-called ‘Celtic Tiger’ economy (which I will discuss shortly). It was a ‘greater good’ that showed up in various guises as will be seen in each of the chapters – the longevity of community projects, the balance between work and ‘life’ for workers, the protection of the environment and changing companies for the better.

To these ends, the Irish government was funding research into FuturesIreland that included representatives from three cohorts: “governance/decision-making, society and wealth creation.” Executives in relief agencies were interested in the implications of corporate responsibility. Representative organizations for the religious, such as the Ecumenical Council for Corporate Responsibility held conferences about ethical investing (in Dublin on March 5th 2009). Accounting firms were organizing their own conferences on CR (Ernst & Young conference on CSR, December 2007). In Brussels the European Union and lobby groups such as the European Coalition for Corporate Justice ran conferences on what stance the EU should take on CR. In London, long-time CR advocates Business in the Community worked to make links between all of these things, employing changes in terminology from corporate social responsibility, to corporate responsibility to responsible business.

My analysis of the semi-structured interviews, conference proceedings, office chat and extensive documentation available throughout the field, was thematic—centered, as I have indicated, on the four thematic concerns of BFR. Drilling into each of these involved reading and re-reading the material for recurring concerns or challenges and the equally telling arguments used to establish issues as concerns, to dismiss them as concerns or to try and address any agreed concerns. Ultimately, my written output has honed in on the kernel of these concerns by analyzing: recurring words or phrases; recurring efforts to build or change understandings of or practices around particular words, phrases or concepts; or recurring inferences about such phrases or concepts and their associated practices.

Though there were four separate themes, in practice there was a great deal of overlap between them, and indeed between the four topics and the fabric of society. To think about and reorient oneself to topics as extensive as community members, employees, customers and suppliers as well as the physical environment, is to think about central components of daily life. But how was the impetus to corporate responsibility and sustainability involved with these central components of daily life?

Liberalism / Neo-liberalism

The dynamics that I came to focus on in these four themes proposed corporate responsibility/sustainability as a new biopolitical arena (Foucault 1988 [1976], 139) that was also accommodating the play within liberalism between freedom and government.

Before discussing that, first I should acknowledge that CR is already typically associated with liberalism of a particular sort – neoliberalism. However this places extraordinary emphasis on indicators about the governance of ‘the market’ which divert attention from the politics deep within it or even more so, cast those politics in a Marxist suspicion where the individual typically becomes overburdened to the benefit of companies. Neoliberalism is in the role of the dark core of globalization and if globalization is everywhere about ‘sameness,’ so is the impact of neoliberal economics and associated policies—the social fabric be damned.

One important symptom of neoliberalism is its support for a greater role for personal responsibility for navigating a life mediated through the market. For example, Welker (2009), in describing the “ethereal, neoliberal, self-help discourses so prominent in the rhetoric of the CSR industry” (144), connects corporate responsibility to what are more explicitly referred to elsewhere as shifts in responsibility associated with neoliberalism. Here individuals take on too much and former authorities relinquish responsibility. Similarly, describing Margaret Thatcher’s turn to neoliberal economic policy, David Harvey (2005) noted how “all forms of social solidarity were to be dissolved in favour of individualism, private property, personal responsibility, and family values” (23). Everything from healthcare to education to having a job seem to be required of the individual and can only be selected and maintained by them. The individual stands at a node of choice and competition for and between individuals, by companies. But there are no safeguards; if an individual has no job or has no healthcare, in the ideal typical neoliberal economy it is only the individual's problem, as the market and companies thrive. It is true that there was an impetus to such measures in Ireland.

What Harvey's comment is also drawing attention to is that these shifts in responsibility erode that of the state and the social fabric it was said to protect. The sale of state assets is a hallmark of neoliberalism whereby private interests take over former state functions effectively replacing state responsibility with corporate and individual responsibility. Harvey further puts it this way: Thatcher's "sale of state assets to stimulate speculative gains on the property market, was also intended to "change the political culture by extending the field of personal and corporate responsibility and encouraging greater efficiency, individual/corporate initiative, and innovation" (60). In this quick gloss, a coupling of personal and corporate responsibility is implied—a neat nesting whereby personal responsibility becomes enlisted in encouraging greater efficiency, individual/corporate initiative and innovation, for corporate and personal gain.

While these developments are to be regarded with concern, my discomfort with this discourse apart from its dogged pessimism and its keenness to prove the one model of neoliberalism, is that it also sets an expectation that if CR was emerging in Ireland, then Ireland must be neoliberal. I must of course concede that to an extent it was. It is true for example that at the time my fieldwork began in 2007 – 2009, Ireland was still experiencing what had come to be called the 'Celtic Tiger' economy. The Celtic Tiger marked rapid change in Ireland's economic fortunes from a ranking of 29th globally in 1987 in GDP per capita ($9,000) to 5th place ($45,000) in 2004, behind only

Luxembourg, Norway, Iceland and Switzerland. Statistically speaking, from 1987 to 1997 Ireland experienced unprecedented employment growth surpassing even the European average rate of unemployment (Tansey 1998, 28–29).

Achieving these figures has been attributed to what some see as Ireland's gradual adoption of neoliberal economic policies, particularly during the office of the Fianna Fáil – Progressive Democrats coalition from 1997, which saw increasing inflation and efforts to deregulate telecommunications, airlines and broadcasting (Murphy 2006). Even as late as 2011, Ireland was ranked as the second most open economy in the world (Ernst & Young 2011, 24).

It is also true that in this context, specifically in relation to the issue of corporate responsibility, state officials declined several prompts to make any regulations for it, with one in particular saying "Ireland's position in this, on all of the debates that I've been present to over a eight year period has, is one of the barely even a night watchman. It's an abstention from direct intervention in what is seen as a business debate generated by business for business to stroke business's conscience and ... I don't think that government has actually seen itself as having even a strong enabling role in the sense that it's just going to allow it to happen and also to emphasize—apparently to the satisfaction of business itself—that as the government sees it as a voluntarist, non-interventionist activity that doesn't call for government intervention, it can happily remain aloof." There was a pressure to disperse state responsibility, just as there was an appetite among companies and people to take or accept more responsibility.

Yet, whether Ireland was a neoliberal economy or not is a contentious issue. Some scholars are of the view that it categorically could not be called a neoliberal economy

(Corcoran 2008; Murphy 2006). Even the OECD (2001) noted that Ireland could be doing more to embrace the market.

For example, on some indicators of neoliberalism the Irish government was not entirely successful. It intervened in the market by setting an attractive corporate tax rate, by setting wages and the terms and conditions of employment through social partnership[1]. Public transport, the large utilities such as electricity, gas, water and peat are still national companies, (though in light of recovery from the recession that began in late 2008 the new Irish government of 2011 has promised to sell these). The OECD characterized the reform of the United Kingdom and New Zealand as contentious ideological reform unlike Ireland whose more pragmatic agenda was designed to build consensus. They noted that “interventionist practices that reduce market efficiency linger in the Irish public sector, and this habit of market intervention present a challenge for further reforms. Although these habits are changing, there is still suspicion of market mechanisms and a cautious attitude towards market based approaches, perhaps reflecting the view of the general electorate” (304).

In addition, the keenness to embrace personal responsibility was often inspired by people’s worries as to what was happening Irish social values and they were keen to do something about it. They often gave effect to that wish through the company they worked for—if even in small ways. For sure, companies were exploring extended roles and responsibilities for themselves that implicated and to an extent helped to shape the responsibilities of others around them and certainly, in doing so, companies were seeking profit, but yet, it is not possible to render these negotiations in a Marxist idiom of big corporation taking over the role of the state where it could further exploit workers and consumers or mold them precisely to its needs. As this dissertation shows, the power dynamics were not so unidirectional, despite the impressive financial resources of business.

Furthermore the existence of social partnership and Murphy's description of it as 'interventionist' does more to convey the significant tension at policy level against following a purely liberal market route with resistance by unions and community and voluntary group leaders—signaling an additional commitment to something greater than individual profit. Hence, there were spaces within Irish experiments with neoliberalism to strongly suggest that one frame for neoliberalism does not fit all.

The place for government as a 'legitimate' authority, the resistance to pure individualism (as some individualism and materialism was embraced), the impetus to call companies to account signaled the extent to which 'the greater good' was under pressure but it also signaled the anxiety to have something that one might call a greater good. In various guises throughout the chapters that follow, those spaces in which the yearning for a 'greater good' played out on various scales is tangible and employed liberally in business circles and CR advocacy in the arguments for corporate responsibility and sustainability which were typically to be channeled through the four stakeholder groups described above.

In that sense the discourse and practices known as 'corporate responsibility' and 'sustainability' were being established as a political zone, where the concerns of the wider social and political register that touched on the deeper question in liberalism, beyond economies, and into the concern about, as Foucault put it (1997a, 74), "governing too much," were also refracted. Could changing distributions of responsibility between state, companies and people navigate that challenge towards a greater good? It is this sense of liberalism that I discuss most here.

Within these politics, new truths were being tested in attendant strategies of intervention that would make people in various guises—employee, community worker, environmental advocate, corporate executive, as well as companies—both the objects of change and subjects crafting their own change. This effort took shape at the level of individual people and individual companies, who were confronted by ties that were articulated for them in the concepts of corporate responsibility and 'sustainability'—all as a means of contributing to an amorphous 'greater good.' These efforts encapsulated people, in Ireland, and on the globe—as the environmental crisis of climate change gained credence (especially after the publication of the IPCC climate change report of 2007 that confirmed anthropogenic climate change). With the objective of saving the vitality of the human race, that is with corporate responsibility and sustainability, we were very much in biopolitical terrain, to use Michel Foucault's (1988 [1976], 139) term (cf. Rabinow and Rose 2006).

Biopolitics / Biopower

Biopolitics is a particular development in liberalism on the theme of what Michel Foucault called 'government,' understood broadly "as "a conduct of conducts" (Foucault 2000, 341). Government, here, refers to all endeavors to shape, guide, direct the conduct of others, whether these be the crew of a ship, the members of a household, the employees of a boss, the children of a family or the inhabitants of a territory. And it also embraces the ways in which one might be urged and educated to bridle one's own passions, to control one's own instincts, to govern oneself" (Rose 1999, 3).

Importantly, "[t]o govern humans is not to crush their capacity to act, but to acknowledge it and to utilize it for one's own objectives" (ibid), a rule that applies equally to the self, governing the self.

In the eighteenth century, governmentality came to be delimited in a particular way in the dynamic between the emergent 'society'—with its population or "general system of living beings" (Foucault 1997b, 70)—and 'the state'—the latter assuming "the exercise of government." Within this dynamic the need for government was queried with the question: "Why must one govern?... [W]hat makes it necessary for there to be a government, and what ends should it pursue with regard to society in order to justify its existence?" (Foucault 1997a, 75). This question or tension is the hallmark of liberalism which comes to be a "regulative scheme of governmental practice and... the theme of a sometimes-radical opposition" (ibid). In other words a critique of government is implicit within liberalism.

Co-extensive with this liberal critique is the crucial matter of governing bodies that are both individual beings (with choices) but also participants in systems of those living beings or 'populations' that must be managed "as a mass of living and coexisting beings who present particular biological and pathological traits and who thus come under specific knowledge and technologies" (Foucault 1997b, 71).

Hence "it was in connection with liberalism that [biopolitical problems] began to have the look of a challenge. In a system anxious to have the respect of legal subjects and to ensure the free enterprise of individuals, how can the 'population' phenomenon, with its specific effects and problems, be taken into account" (Foucault 1997a, 73)?

Biopolitics then was "the endeavor, begun in the eighteenth century, to rationalize the problems presented to governmental practice by the phenomena characteristic of a group of living human beings constituted as a population: health, sanitation, birthrate, longevity, race…" (ibid).

The power involved in administering life or biopower is usefully thought of in terms of two poles—one interested in the human body itself and seeking to "maximize its forces and integrate it into efficient systems" (Rabinow and Rose 2006, 196)—the other focusing on the population "the species body, the body imbued with the mechanisms of life: birth, morbidity, mortality, longevity" (ibid). This dual focus came to be exercised "within a series of 'great technologies of power'... In so establishing themselves, new kinds of political struggle could emerge, in which 'life as a political object' was turned back against the controls exercised over it, in the name of claims to a 'right' to life, to one's body, to health, to the satisfaction of one's needs" (ibid).

As this struggle to "rationalize the problems presented to government practice" continues, the power "situated and exercised at the level of life" (196), "entails [1] one or more truth discourses about the 'vital' character of living human beings; [2] an array of authorities considered competent to speak that truth; [3] strategies for intervention upon collective existence in the name of life and health; [4] and modes of subjectification, in which individuals work on themselves in the name of individual or collective life or health" (195).

Ethics

In the fourth component just above, the individual is emphasized as is the capacity for self-government that is proper to individuals. Specifically, the authors indicate that this component is ethical striving or that work on the self where actors are asked or invited to "govern themselves," in particular making themselves "into subjects of esteemed qualities or kinds" (Faubion 2011, 3). Importantly, in keeping with the larger framework of governmentality within which it sits, as Foucault puts it "the freedom of the subject and its relation to others" is "the very stuff of ethics" (Foucault 1997c, 300).

The ethical domain, where one engages in self-cultivation towards an esteemed quality, involves recognizing that feature of oneself that requires change (ethical substance), an ambition to become a changed subject (telos), a work regime on oneself to effect change (ethical work) and ongoing evaluation as to what that striving is achieving (mode of subjectivation).

In light of the explanation of the biopolitical above by Rabinow and Rose, the discourse of corporate responsibility and sustainability has all of the characteristics of the biopolitical arena *including* a role for ethical striving. Corporate responsibility and sustainability is a truth discourse about supporting the human race through assessments and remediation of individual vitality that involve management expertise and importantly, self-cultivation.

The initial recognition of the need for change, the identification of what should change and what ensues, takes place in the presence of what Faubion coins as the themitical – something that functions for the subject as what I can best describe as 'strong' or perhaps even 'righteous pointers towards change.' The relationship between the themitical and the subject might be homologous to how Luhmann (1996) distinguishes an environment in relation to systems that move between more and less closure and complexity as they adjust over time to and with their environment—just as environments themselves morph over time.

Such a homology also captures the specificity of the relationship between the themitical and the ethical subject and the essential communication between them (though the ethical domain should not be understood as a dimension of systems theory).

While Faubion intends the themitical to capture the "more homeostatic and reproductive aspects of ethical autopoiesis" (20) with the comparison I have just drawn, I also envisage that as a locus for what is fitting, the themitical also functions as 'potentiality' for changed or new subject positions, thus as righteous impetus for change.

While the themitical occupies the space of the 'rule' Faubion makes clear this is no categorical rule. Rather by his description of the roles of 'others' in ancient ethical formation, their pedagogical value, their mode of instruction as well as the 'instruction' derived from the discourses and practices of others, the normative quality of the themitical is established and embodied, set up as something that is a coding for ethical value (90).

Consider for example a semiotics grounded in sometimes contrasting commentary on the behaviour of others; shared thoughts, with equal potential for contrast, about one's efforts to forge one's own stance against the behaviour of others or against some or another new truth or consider the instructive value of actual deeds.

These are the kinds of considerations against which, discourses, practices and all, we can evaluate our subjectivation, our ethical telos and the ways in which ethical striving might be routinized in relation to diverse topics and without resorting to identical programmes for different people.

In a way, the themitical encapsulates the collective authorship of what constitutes laudable ethical striving. Thus while it is the more homeostatic of the pair, the themitical functions as righteous impetus to change because, in keeping with its "weakly dialectical relationship" with the ethical (113), it is the valorization of normativity in an autopoietic system (113) in which many 'others,' as well as ourselves, participate in the ways sampled above, inflecting our judgements of what is ethically valuable, particularly as it relates to our own striving.

In that way, I highlight the complexity of the themitical, its being made up of mutually paradoxical norms and ideas of virtue or the ideal, and so itself a potential source of at least the coding of the justification of changes of the status quo.

The themitical is a normative force without being restricted to nor necessarily excluding what might be more commonly approximated in the term 'morality.' In the context of this dissertation it might be captured by all of the forces coming to bear on making a sustainable and responsible life felt, even if subliminally, and making it necessary and good.

From Vitality to Ethics

All of the forces coming to bear on making the need for a sustainable and responsible life felt characterize both the biopolitical (a generalized power negotiating freedom and government) and the themitical (informing individual self government) in this dissertation. (The telos of ethical striving itself was a different and unpredictable matter.)

Throughout my fieldwork I was struck in particular by how the role of an excellent individual was invoked and logically necessary to sustainability and corporate responsibility but in particular, how these ethics came to be fore grounded in comparison to sheer biological vitality as the compass of sustainability grew.

Certainly at one end of the spectrum as corporate responsibility and sustainability related to the *physical environment,* the limits of what we could do about climate change were grounded in some vital characteristics of humans, in what I might call a *zoopolitics*[2] that articulated, through individuals' ethical scope (and its limits), with new imperatives for the survival of the species. For example, one environmental activist gave precedence to the limits of her own body in this context when she said "I'm not going to stop breathing out just because carbon dioxide is bad for the environment. I'll do what I can within my means."

The rendering of the issues at the level of populations were typically more plentiful. They too had their physical roots. For example, after a presentation on the extent of the problem and the kind of cooperative transnational response that would be required, a company executive joked about how it reminded him of Malthus—referring to how that philosopher highlighted the limitations of the carrying capacity of a physical environment and that when exceeded, the human population would decline naturally. (I have sometimes heard suspicious remarks to the effect that Malthusian theories were used to explain away the Irish Famine of 1840s that occurred under the watch of the British government while his support of taxes on corn imports to Great Britain are also said to have substantively contributed to it. In that light, physical limitations were just an excuse.)

What was noteworthy to me was that where the problem was put in terms of a generalized threat to populations, the imperative to change *our actions* first—as a route to changing something physical—were very much to the fore. When I asked another if his company's rapid adaptation to addressing sustainability issues required a change in mindset, his explanation focused on the emergency at hand *for everyone* as if this issue for vitality writ large could only be resolved by individual actions. "The company is conscious of the fact that – and it's not conscious because it's the company, it's conscious because it's out there for everybody to see on television, its on newspapers, its on radio, *we have to do something* and if we don't *do* something, we're all in serious trouble" (my emphasis).

Foucault discusses the death power of present day wars and how "the technology of wars has caused them to tend increasingly toward all-out destruction [but] the decision that initiates them and the one that terminates them are in fact increasingly informed by the naked question of survival" (Foucault 1988, 137). He was referring to the atomic situation but it is our own interactions with our physical environment that have now distilled the biopolitical, its liberal matrix and its protagonists as individual bodies and as populations, to the crisis of sustainability and what that means for individual subjectivity and actions.

The danger to the species took shape so that change at the level of individual dispositions to action was required and the problem was as much about protecting the environment from humans as protecting humans from the environment. In other words in this zoopolitics, while the environment might be the threat to our survival, we had made it that way.

These subtleties and more were evident in a conversation I had with an executive from the state electricity company, the ESB. They had developed a brand for their sustainability initiatives through a staff competition. To me at first, there was something of wishful thinking in the closed circle of their graphic as if the threat posed to the future of humans was about an antagonism between humans and environment, the latter represented by a blank featureless space, God-like and unknowable. Yet it became clear in conversation that the remedy to that threat was not linked to what was without (i.e. the environment) but to what was within, in people's own actions.

FOR GENERATIONS TO COME

> John: Ok. This is the brand now. [drawing] If you look at Electric Mail out there and you look at any of the articles about sustainability, it'll include that little brand on it too and that is zero emissions, it's also inclusivity, everybody's involved, it's buildings, it's transport, it's trees and biodiversity I suppose, and it's people. It's an adult and it's a child and the message really is then, from the adult to the child for generations to come. So in a sense we can do what we like and continue to do what we like and we'll probably survive in the world because [we won't] all be dead but what are we handing over to what's coming after us? And I think myself that maybe in the developed world in particular with the political will and with companies like ourselves and others championing the cause and really working at it, the people will actually *begin to do the things that need to be done*. I mean you can see it and I can see it. I mean I can see it at home, even my self before I ever got involved in this you're starting to think about how's my attic? How are my walls? What, how are my thermostats?...The goal of sustainability is to benefit the environment, improve our lives and achieve economic prosperity… [E]nlightened governments and enlightened countries are saying yes that in actual fact *it's an opportunity to re-construct how we live our lives and to achieve prosperity again* through sustainability and

> sustainable works… [S]ustainable development is that which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs and that brings me to our own logo and then I explain our own logo that in a sense having talked about the climate change and having talked about what we need to do by 2050 that it is really about what sort of a world do we want to hand onto to our children and our children's children. And interestingly enough... sometimes when I'm asked as a director of ESB in a state-owned company, what's my ambition, and I would say and I think I've used I've used this a lot over the years, my ambition as part of the leadership... group in this company is to take ESB as I found it, make it better and hand it on to the next generation better than I found it (my emphasis).

John is articulating a classic case of reflexive modernization (Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994) with his individual reflection (and action) about a generally-felt risk pervading our lives, our families, our institutions—a risk that has issued from the success of modernity and that seems to extend (in an ecology) to a questioning and a re-embedding of 'tradition'—traditional models, traditional ways of thinking and acting. As the authors themselves put it "the more societies are modernized, the more agents (subjects) acquire the ability to reflect on the social conditions of their existence and to change them in that way" (174).

Clearly for John, this threat to ourselves that we ourselves were generating and that only our changed actions could remedy, was also beginning to involve more than our bodies as if the life of our species was coterminous with or could be extended to other things like "better companies" and the possibility of achieving 'prosperity again'—an extension from *zoopolitics* to *biopolitics*.

Similarly while touring the Irish Intel facility, watching the personnel sealed in their environmental suits make high-tech electronic chips, our guide talked about how the goal was to "save the air and the product from humans." The subtext might be read as "because air and the product are what humans want." The further subtext that might be read in this remark was that humans were again both the protagonists and in a round-about way, their own worst enemy, with what humans value—air and production, like companies—also under threat and environment being the reluctant instrument. Between the two scenarios at ESB and at Intel, the closed circle and the environmental suit functioned to constrain and protect humans both.

Ultimately alleviating the threat to our conjoined bodies and economies, represented in these metaphors by physical barriers of one kind or another, rested on the changes we could make to our daily practices in the domains of production and living—at the level of the individual scalable to the collective. In other words saving our bodies from our machinations on environment would require changed ethics.

Work was afoot to try and change the Irish ethic of environment. An Irish government TV advertising campaign reminded citizens how their individual responses to the issue of climate change would define the present generation (likening it to the war of independence that had defined the previous one) and this generation's response was to be crystalized in knowing their own personal "number"—a reference to at least calculating their own usage of carbon. Another, promoting a cycle to work campaign using tax breaks for new bikes and inter-companies competitions on miles cycled, had the objective of "changing how you view yourself and keeping that consistent no matter if you change jobs."

My chapter on environment (Chapter 1) is about that attempt by companies and others to forge a relationship (as the makings of a truth and a strategy of intervention) between individual self-governance (i.e. between one's ethic and one's body) and the collective good through numbers and companies as medium. In the example just given, the new truth in CR advocacy should be that good individual numbers would mean that we had healthy companies and a healthy planet and that all might be saved. Making such truths tangible, the strategies of intervention focused on actually identifying the right numbers and then changing those numbers between companies and employees. However a mechanistic roll-out of company dictates injected into individual doing was not always how it played out. The new truths and the strategies were tested, not programmable and ethical striving was genuinely a practice of freedom following its own path to the survival of the species.

Nonetheless as well as having implications for ethics in relation to the environment, that were conjuring nascent alignments such as those I've just mentioned—those between bodies and companies for example—it seemed that rather than just being a direct problem between humans and the physical environment, companies with encouragement from CR advocates began to embrace the idea of 'ecology' and reach out through it so that the ethical thinking, the need to govern oneself and to align with others who would change their disposition to action, suddenly needed to involve or to attach to other elements.

Other elements besides environment, like a sustainable social fabric, came into the Environment (with a capital 'E') of companies, individuals and populations and they each had their own gravity when it came to what responsibility and sustainability would mean. As the environment demanded sustainability or a focus on life, thinking about sustainability changed what Environment and Life should mean, what should be encompassed in the support for Life which referring in a broader way to an idea of 'good living'. In even thinking about these issues, the complexity, the extent of the relationship between environment and human activity became apparent. The relationship could to be seen as an ecology (my word / interpretation) in that Environment (as well as everything in it) and humans were inextricably tied to one another through extensive links, sometimes-impossible trade-offs, unexpected feedback and unpredictability, where an effort towards a collective lofty goal, effected through changed dispositions to action, were deemed necessary—hence an 'ethical ecology'.

Ecology

The word 'ecology' has many valences. The version that I subscribe to follows the kinds of themes emerging in the New Ecology ("of ecosystems or complex systems theory" Abel and Stepp 2003, 1) in the physical, chemical and biological sciences. This dissertation documents dynamics across scales and between 'nature' and 'culture,' that are mutually constitutive and regulative, that yield uncertainty and surprise which is born of a great deal of contingency which is in turn described by the limited knowledge of such dynamics and perpetuated by their continual change (cf. Abel and Stepp 2003, 3–5; Holling 1993, 553–554). There are "emergent patterns of self-organization in a complex system" (Abel and Stepp 2003, 4).

Or as Geertz (1963) put it "The concept of an ecosystem... emphasizes the material interdependencies among the group of organisms which form a community and the relevant physical features of the setting in which they are found, and the scientific task becomes one of investigating the internal dynamics of such systems and the ways in which they develop and change" (3). In many ways this dissertation is about how such changes involve the definition and re-definition of boundaries.

My meaning of 'ecology' is not intent on exploring explicitly ecological concepts such as thermodynamics (particularly the formation of 'dissipative structures' Prigogine 1980; Prigogine and Stengers 1984). It avoids many of the critiques of how 'ecology' has intersected with the social sciences (Scoones 1999) where it is said to have been overly concerned with confirming an equilibrium in population dynamics just as there is equilibrium in natural systems. It avoids stories of structural functional groups tied to a homeostatic 'nature' that is then for example disrupted by capitalism as well as having no inter-scalar implications and no influence on social, economic or political spheres (481-489). Neither is my use of the word meant to allude to a cultural ecology where social institutions have "a functional unity that expressed solutions to recurrent subsistence problems" (Moran 2005, 16).

By ecology, I mean to refer to the sense of a growing consciousness and a deliberate cultivation of the interconnections, dependencies and feedback between heretofore discreet parts of the social landscape—between business and employees for example—that was being presented as compelling ethical striving but I also mean an ecology in the sense of how this argument for ethics had roots in concern for the planet itself that, like a contagion, then extended to the less biological concern with the sustainability of our ways of life—including economies and communities. This ecology could be explained sufficiently that people would intuit that it was 'true'—the interdependencies between companies, people and a wider Environment than the physical environment. That new view made it clear that problems and attempts at solutions were not to be found in the ground or up in the air but in our relations with those people beside us, in an effort towards a collective lofty goal, that could only be effected through changed dispositions to action.

Hence this dissertation is broadly about how the biopolitics (Foucault 1988 [1976], 139) of corporate responsibility (or CR) and sustainability became rendered as an ethical ecology, not dissociated from the biopolitical but rooted in it. In one way, an ethical ecology is what was happening as the biopolitics of corporate responsibility and sustainability became instrumentalized in the present (made worldly against an eschatology) where biopolitics were reified though present.

This origin of the concern for responsibility and sustainability in ecology but the extension of that logic to a bigger Ecology was made very explicit by the corporate executive that I call Frankie. According to her the concept of CSR had started 30 or 40 years ago. The big companies that had impacts on the environment suddenly realized that they couldn't "just keep digging stuff out of the earth [...] and not worry about it." They didn't do it for optimistic reasons but because of the green movement and the fear of being "taken to task" or the risk of "negative publicity." So they decided they'd "better do something about it..." However Frankie goes on to say that "...having looked at the environment [...] it was [...] a short hop" to the communities who were affected by their environmental impacts - and so, "community programmes developed."

For Frankie, this progression necessitated a subtle but important change in mindset from seeing community and environmental representatives not as people who need to be appeased (and not the only people) but as people with a 'say' in the business. From there, the next logical step would be to see that way too, employees, suppliers and customers. By paying attention to those with a say in the business, the business would meet their needs and itself have a better chance of continuity. Everyone is in this together, so the story goes. In other words, as Frankie tells it, that physical environmental sense of ecology had become much more conceptual and all-encompassing.

The ‘environment’—referring to the physical environment—was the ‘real’ somewhat tangible backdrop for Environment—an imagined space of all company stakeholders including the environment. The focus on environment wasn’t just compelling a focus on environment. It was deepening the meaning of environment itself for the companies in its midst. Kirsch (2010) borrows a phrase from linguistics to describe the word sustainability as a “strategically deployable shifter” (Urciuoli 2003) these being “words or phrases that lack a standard lexical meaning or definition because their referential value depends on the context. Their key function is to indicate social alignment” (Kirsch 2010, 91). While I agree with referring to sustainability this way, the balance of his argument does not ring true. The use of the word ‘sustainability’ by corporations he argues, “is contingent on the emptying out of the ecological aspects of the definition of sustainability” (92).

My data suggests rather that juxtaposing the environment and companies prompted the company to think not just about its own sustainability or the sustainability of profit but to see its role in the Environment and how that could shape its own future for better and for worse. Hence these truths promulgated by CR advocates were that companies’ own sustainability was wrapped up in sustainability writ large, in deeply connected personal, social, economic and environmental concerns.

Corporate responsibility and sustainability were motivating companies to examine all kinds of new ways that they might work or align their objectives *with* other entities like workers or community groups as well as environmental representatives. The beauty of the phrase of sustainability from everyone's point of view was that would-be co-dependents could buy into it for their own sakes.

Another interlocutor that I call Sam could describe this in her vision for what she called 'sustainable enterprise'. A former NGO activist, she too started with the origin of CR in environmental concerns. She argued that a proper relationship with the environment is important for companies, and her comments are tied to the 'ecology' of Ireland which is ever-present as a 'place' that is "small" that doesn't have enough natural resources to have "mining" and where "tourism is important and the environment is also very important for all sorts of reasons." However her conversations with her group of business people suggested that in Ireland the physical environmental issues were not as material and in such a context the burning question was what sustainability should mean.

The answer was that Irish companies' relationships *with people* were most important.

> If you think about what big business is in Ireland like banks and things it's much less clear how they will be affected by [physical environmental issues]. Okay you see them now sending you your online statement rather than paper and you can talk about ethical loans and this kind of thing but it's not as clear what [sustainability] should be and I suppose in Ireland we've decided it should have a social dimension because of the kind of country we are which is very much a knowledge economy. We don't have natural resources. There aren't loads of people here mining and drilling so the social stuff has to be one of the key sustainability issues for business in Ireland because that's what brings business here. Businesses come here to invest because they see the workforce and they see the people.

In other words people *were* the environment for companies in Ireland. For her group it pushed interpretations of sustainability in a direction where business should think of all their dependencies, including the physical environment but also including a range of other factors in their midst including a 'social dimension.'

I asked: "By social what do you mean?" She responded: "Well, that's what I'm trying to get this group to do is to think outside the box. I mean obviously they talk about workforce – so things like sustaining the workforce and looking at levels of education and that kind of thing but it also has things like integration and emigration and that sort of stuff, getting that right." She went on to talk about the work of Richard Florida (2004) who argued that creative cities that have great IT infrastructure, that retain talent and that are tolerant attract industry and Sam suggested that this is the kind of place that Dublin wants to be[3].

This was not government led. Elsewhere she noted that government was very focused on the environment and the companies felt that "[i]t should have other dimensions to it so it's very hard for business to contribute in a way except cut their emissions and do the kind of typical things that you would expect." The other dimensions that is should have were social and not the sense of social problem solving which government is good at with this plan and that task force but rather:

> The societal stuff which isn't really regulated by the state but it influences business and maybe more – some things like consumer trends, wellbeing, consumption patterns - all that kind of stuff – yeah, issues that will affect me even though I don't live in Ballyfermot [a disadvantaged area of Dublin] and I'm not unemployed. You know, that kind of stuff and that's the bit that's not really covered off anywhere and it doesn't necessarily, in a way you don't want it regulated and covered by the state but it's not named anywhere as, like it's much more important that people with money change their consumer habits for example than it is that we solve unemployment from a purely sustainable development environment sense and I don't mean that it's not important. Obviously the other stuff is important in a societal way so it's just trying to find that balance

Sustainable development, consumer habits, unemployment and environment were words that tumbled out mixed together. She quoted a business man who understood:

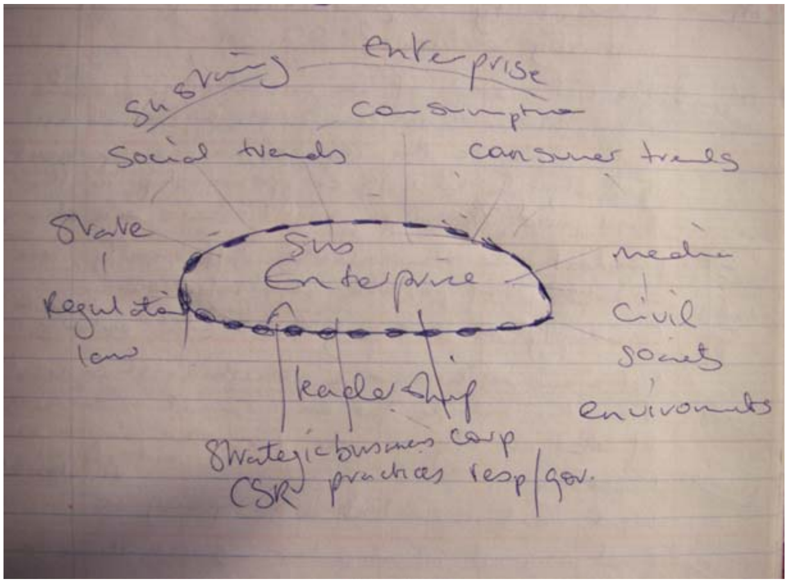
> [T]hat you must restore back the environment to the way you found it as best possible obviously when you're extracting stuff from it but he also understands that you need to have sustainable, viable, communities of people because they're your workforce and you also need to maintain the good will, license to operate thing so you also need to be nice guys, you can't afford to be just coming through and pillaging where you are…

As she spoke it was clear that she was encouraging the business people to consider a wide range of factors as well as environment in their surroundings, connected to them—in their Environment so to speak.

> E: it kind of means – it's a slight stretching of the word sustainability because you know it started out in that particular environmental sense and then the social becomes this add-on but so what they want to do is okay keep the environmental stuff but stretch it
> S: absolutely
> E; so that it encompasses all of this other stuff too
> S; Well it has to and [a researcher] who we've been working with talks about this idea of not just the sustainable enterprise and we talk about this, the sustainable enterprise is your own business practice but then sustaining enterprise or sustaining business which is the environment around business and that has to be people – you need to have people to work for you, you need to not be surrounded by NGOs and a media who hate you so how do you influence how people relate to you? You need to have the right state infrastructure. You need to have all of that outside the business for the business to function as well as having more efficient practices and less emissions and all the good stuff that you're doing.

Then I asked her to draw out what she meant by sustainable enterprise and sustaining enterprise and the following is what she produced and producing the diagram kicked off a long conversation that echoed Frankie as it came back to a recognition of the Environment and all the factors in it, including the concerns with employees, with local communities, with good customer and supplier relations besides environment – all those that we have been discussing from community to workplace and marketplace.

Interestingly it also placed the enterprise within a *porous* barrier.



S; now this is only off the top of my head because this changes all the time where I suppose you have the sustainable business okay – so let's call it the enterprise or whatever, the sustainable enterprise and then you have sustaining enterprise - and I don't have a big flip chart, you know. So that in there you would have your kind of strategic CSR if you know what I mean by that, so your business, your business practices [note the three phrases at the bottom of the diagram with arrows reaching in to the center circle]
E; so that this is about the survival of the company in that sense, in here
S; yeah in its practices, your corporate responsibility and your governance, all that stuff and then out here you'd have kind of social trends, consumer trends – this is a very bad diagram – consumption, you have the media, you have civil society, you have the state, you know you have all the regulation and law and everything that goes with that kind of going around in a circle and then you have obviously the environment and then at all these different, this would be a kind of a dotted, not very good
E: hm mm, porous
S: this is all in and out stuff and it's all affecting these core things of yours... well it's the essential thing of the internal and the external and how they impact each other and where, I suppose where the responsibility, how much responsibility in here is there for what's out here and then how much influence out here comes in there but it's not, we try and throw in the stuff like, because you can do it at just the social, environmental, economic which are part of it but

> there are all these softer bits around that like the media for example which influences all, you know the influencers – the state, so it's not just the three topics [of the Brundtland model of social, economic and environmental]... I mean we're trying to think of it in Sustaining Enterprise as almost reframing competitiveness. We're thinking of this external agenda as competitiveness really. How do you maintain competitiveness? How do you sustain competitiveness and it can't all be just about low-cost labour and low electric prices and all of that.

It was fascinating how this diagram, essentially as she said about the internal and external and how they impact on each other, described a huge project, enveloping the social, the environmental and the economic, always touching back to the environment and healthy bodies that can now somehow be construed as linked to everything surrounding them and shaping them.

So according to Sam companies were not trying to empty the ecological from the word sustainability– they were using the ecological to figure out where business, society, people and environment all fit in relation to one another and what changes in people's actions that would require.

> E; so are they moving through a phase of thinking about this sustainability stuff as survival first, recognising that sustainability is linked to their survival as businesses? Survival because of the social and not just the environmental
> S; I think they see it as an element of their business model. I think a lot of them now would have one of their strategic aims... so it's about survival yeah but it's not not in that kind of a negative way I think it's survival but also improvement of their model and if you like trying to *shape their business model to meet the future* (my emphasis).

The recognition of all these connections, blendings and implications, rooted in asking what it means to interact with one's environment towards sustainability, prompted me to characterize my field among businesses, business people, CR advocates and company stakeholders—who for the most part were willing to engage within limits—in terms of an ecology where the fundamental question was: what in my environment changes my existence and is demanding that I change my existence? It was an ethical question for all involved.

Ethical Ecology

Within that web of connections all kinds of alignments were possible between elements that were now recognized as part of the Life-system in this Environment. That is what the other three chapters of the dissertation address—how a biopolitical extensiveness born of physical environment and sheer life came to foreground its ethical dimension, changing dispositions to action for the sake of a greater good that included continuity of sheer life of course (*zoopolitics*) but that came to encompass more to do with a livable life now (*biopolitics*).

It was a subtle departure from human vitality while still being inflected by it and in turn inflecting ideas of the common good, of good global health to be achieved at work, of social support work using the skills of business—new concerns that business could channel through its supply chains to customers and suppliers and even to competitors through self-reflection and self-governance enveloping individuals in a 'thicker' and 'wider' ecology.

In the workplace, Chapter 2, the failings of work (a poor working environment) were threatening our "sense of humanity" and our health and our brains and without addressing them, neither workers and by association, companies, would be sustainable. Global wellness was at stake as well as worker satisfaction and national prosperity. The strategies for intervention described by company doctors and CR advocates, ranged from positive emotions to positive relationships and to allowing staff to address their own health at work through diet and exercise. The sustainability of global economics were tied to individual healthy brains fostered in an Environment that now included ‘work.’

In the first two chapters—the chapter on environment discussed earlier and the one just above on workplace—the biopolitical quality of sustainability and corporate responsibility, the ways of thinking that focus on conducting vital bodies within a population through new truths and strategies of intervention is easy to call forth. However as we move through the chapters, sustainability and corporate responsibility became less clearly biopolitical—not *directly* about zoē or the vitality of bodies—but the word ‘sustainability’ insinuates it and transports the desire for vital bodies to the not-so-human or vital corpus of the corporation and ‘the social,’ merging zoē and bios.

While biopolitics always cultivated an ethics, in this extended ecology of the biopolitical from a sustainability born of ‘ecology’, at some remove from bodies, the ethical is to the fore—the prompt towards change from blunt aspirations to save or cultivate *something*—to save the community and cultivate a vibrant place, to cultivate oneself, to save the company and to save the planet. The experts speak these truths and offer strategies for intervention.

The new truth about community, Chapter 3, told by business experts and CR advocates in the context of sustainability and corporate responsibility saw community as a place of essential life-sustaining bonds between humans – the kinds of social relations necessary to foster a good place to live, thus a place that could host a viable workforce and less critical neighbors for business. Hence the concern with longevity was being extended to community groups, to strong local social bonds and to good corporate-employee relations where community support work was facilitated, because they are vital to human living. Advocates assembled those truths as well as the strategies for intervention. It was a context ripe for ethical striving where staff in community groups were confronted by a new ‘good’ of partnership with companies towards the larger good of better lives. Such new truths were forcing a reconsideration by community groups, by companies and by staff in companies of their ethics while negotiating old truths and still relevant contexts and powers. An ethical ecology, rich in the themitical, and within which someone might orient their self governance and work on it was available.

In corporate responsibility in the Marketplace, Chapter 4, new truths about the link between the transparency of corporate conversions to responsibility and corporate longevity was forcing companies to reflect on themselves and to work in collaboration—if even in an oblique way—*with* other companies to re-make themselves as fit for competition about transparency. The question was which of them could be the most transparent about their internal overhaul conducted on behalf of their responsibilities to the environment, their employees, their local communities and their customers and suppliers? CR advocates and self-styled ‘leading’ companies were creating the truths and positing strategies for intervention as executives within companies remade themselves but more so, the company itself. In a link to a sustainability that more clearly encompasses corporate longevity alongside social, economic and environmental longevity—and their kernel of well bodies—this too is a context replete with ethical potential. Presented with this ecology of bodies in social, economic and environmental crisis, ethical substances, modes of subjectivation, ethical work and an ethical telos were coming into relief for the company in the resolution of themselves as corporate 'personalities' worthy of and distributing trust. This was also the case for key executives as internal non-conformists, as change makers redistributing trust and linking the company interior to the outside world. As both sought the goal of greater transparency—ostensibly for profitable reasons—both company and lead executives came to have changed outlooks on the world through changed 'being'.

There are two final theoretical points to touch on. In the first, an ethical ecology is not the same as an ethico-politics (Rose 1999). Rather an ethical ecology includes ethico-politics. An ethical ecology is ethico-political. According to Rose, "[i]f discipline *individualizes and normalizes*, and bio-power *collectivizes and socializes*, ethico-politics concerns itself with the *self-techniques necessary for responsible self-government* and the *relations between one's obligation to oneself and one's obligations to others*" (Rose 1999, 188). Ethico-politics "seeks to govern a polity through the micro-management of the self-steering practices of its citizens…" (193), this involves "the complex construction of assemblages that will link up rather general ethical rationalities to very specific, local and technical devices for the government of conduct" (190).

By distinguishing an ethical ecology from an ethico politics, I mean to emphasize the specific origin in ecology that has become a way of thinking connecting a diverse range of striving that like an ethico-politics describe the adjustment of one's own behavior vis a vis others. Here specifically the striving is not necessarily a response to the "absence of any objective guarantees for politics or our values" (188) and it is not necessarily local (though it is in the Community chapter—Chapter 3) but it is tied back to the ecological that describes the pathways by which all these concerns are coming together and reaching out with extensive tendrils but also infusing their substance. This ecology is necessarily about the pressure on individual dispositions to action to work towards the well-being (wrapped around the survival) of a wide range of others in potentially hostile environments. Business and all that business touches is implicated in the assemblage whereby the threat of the future changes being and how one acts in the world.

On the second theoretical point, it is possible to think about what corporate responsibility and sustainability were doing in systems terms, specifically using how Luhmann describes society and how he sees that society dealing with ecological problems.

For Luhmann, society and social systems are defined by communication that can refer to a system's environment or what is different to it. The communication is to a large degree, self-referential and thus closed (Miller 1994, 105). These largely closed system communications, which constitute the system, function on the basis of "'binary codes' (closed contrast sets) and programmes or criteria for correct codings... [For example] the monetary mechanism of the economic system (which includes any actions involving the payment of money) can be reduced to the binary code 'payment/non-payment' which determines the economy as a rigorously closed, circular and self-referentially constituted system" (Miller 1994, 106)

This differentiation between systems and the self-referential character of systems communications means for Luhmann that the problem-solving capacity of social systems (e.g. in relation to the environment) is limited. Through functional differentiation, systems become increasingly complex and detached from the environment—and while this may contribute to the problem of environmental irrelevance, systems differentiation and complexity cannot resolve it, but point elsewhere and create an ‘ecology of ignorance’ (Luhmann 1998, 75)– i.e. I don’t know how to deal with it: that’s the job of another function.

However in corporate responsibility and sustainability I suggest that the range of communicative connections that are being made across sectors would effect a kind of limited bridging or shifting of system boundaries for the sake of sustainability (and not just with the effect of benefitting business but also constraining business in new ways as well as ‘freeing’ and constraining others in new ways).

Consider how the meanings of certain key phrases or words associated with business or another social domain and that are supposed to function as defining categories or guiding differences between systems are being challenged—like competition and collaboration (Chapter 4), ‘strategy’ as confrontation but also as a fixing or connecting word (Chapter 3), ‘work’ now meaning work *and* life (Chapter 2); company ‘success’ not as profit only but as skills and time or as strong environmental numbers (Chapter 3 and 1 respectively).

Arguably these structural challenges, are also trust experiments which I mention explicitly in Chapter 4 but that are relevant to all the chapters. Furthermore, such structural challenges might be said to foster new systemic observation points which I link to the appearance of latent capacities in familiar domains such as work (Chapter 2).

One might speculate about the building of an intersystemic resonance that is tackling precisely that ‘ecology of ignorance’. Luhmann notes that “Ecological relevance for society is mediated by its relevance for the human body, possibly heightened by perceptions and anticipations, that is, by psychic mechanisms. In thinking about destruction, it makes no sense to think of people and society separately" (83). The demand arising from the biopolitics I have described is for an ethical response – change at the level of persons within their homes, within their corporations as a response to environmental problems (where corporations are being corralled into diluting their autopoiesis to an extent or to operate it through other systems), but it is a style of thought that then also reaches across other separations to apply itself to other formerly discreet concerns with the question "what can companies contribute to solving that problem?"

The current dearth generally perceived outside such circles is signaled by the typical question I am asked when I describe my study as relating to corporate responsibility. Usually with a smile I get the skeptical question, "Well, did you find any?" In relation to many companies the answer is "No" but there is a great deal of work being invested in changing that and the extensive landscape that it touches. This dissertation offers a unique perspective on corporate responsibility and sustainability that engages deeply with the relationship between those emerging outlooks and practices, the advocacy for them and liberalism.

NOTES

1 Social Partnership, (ESP) was an important national governance structure that rescued Ireland allegedly from the jaws of IMF intervention in the late 80s (Mac Sharry, White, and O'Malley 2000, 45). Under that threat several representative groups who had been consultees of the NESC—the National Economic and Social Council, the State-led social and economic think-tank that has advised government on social and economic policy since 1973—came together in a bid to turn the economy around. In 1986, with the urging of its Union, employer, agricultural and government consultees, NESC created the basis for agreement between those same members, with government and opposition backing, on a three-year *Programme for National Recovery* (Department of An Taoiseach 1987). A significant dimension of this effort was "the creation of a fiscal, exchange rate and monetary climate conducive to economic growth" (5), centered on debt stabilization through spending cuts and wage agreements. Seven subsequent agreements documented how the country should continue the recovery and eventually, how it should ensure everyone benefited from the growing wealth of the so-called Irish 'Celtic Tiger' economy. The complexities of how people entered partnership are documented by Larragy (2006).

2 See Agamban (1998, 1–3) for a distinction between *zoē* and *bios* or for a distinction between 'life' and a 'way of life'.

3 See also Porter (2000) who poses a similar thesis in relation to clusters. Clusters are defined as "geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers and service providers, firms in related industries, and associated institutions (e.g. universities, standards agencies, and trade associations) in particular fields that compete but also cooperate" (253). Of clusters he says: "The presence of clusters suggests that *much of competitive advantage lies outside a given company or even outside its industry*, residing instead in the locations of its business units" (254).

Chapter 1 – Environment

This chapter is about companies' and people's efforts to understand and ensure they were having positive impact on the physical environment, pushed in part by the pressures of corporate responsibility advocates but pushed also by a range of vectors, clustered at various registers—political, economic and scientific internationally as well as in the UK and in Ireland. Of course such concerns were also cognizant of the existentially pressing, imminent shortage of the most common factor in global energy and production: oil. Together these forces descended on the issue of human activities with respect to the physical environment. What would companies and people do with them?

The report of the Brundtland Commission in the late 1980s (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987), the UN's Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 which spawned the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change that came into effect in 2005 were all milestones in a story of increasing anxiety primarily about western societies' relationship with environment including business's role in that.

Just prior to my fieldwork the number of reports being issued proliferated, particularly in relation to the issue of climate change. In 2007 the Stern Review (2007) and the UN's International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) confirmation of climate change (2007) were published. The European Union agreed a climate and energy package in March 2007 that from early 2008 went through the stages of legislative proposals and ratification, coming into law in June 2009. Enveloped in that package was the Emissions Trading System, the "cornerstone of the European Union's policy to combat climate change and its key tool for reducing industrial greenhouse gas emissions cost-effectively… the EU ETS covers some 11,000 power stations and industrial plants in 30 countries” (European Commission 2010). In pilot phase from 2005, emissions allowances were allocated for free but as the system progresses the allowances will be reduced (to 21 percent less than 2005 levels) and companies will have to buy them at auction from 2013. Additional sectors will also come under the scope. In other words markets for carbon were proliferating where carbon would have a price that would have to appear on company balance sheets.

Not only that but climate change was becoming an issue in popular culture in films involving Hollywood’s Leonardo diCaprio (Conners and Conners 2007) and former US Vice-President Al Gore (Guggenheim 2006). The Irish Government was funding a high profile campaign called ‘Change’ targeting business and consumer awareness and change. It pumped out stirring TV advertising narrating how, in contrast to the bleak images it showed from the times of Ireland’s civil war and mass emigrations, climate change was now Ireland’s greatest challenge. In addition, Ireland’s close neighbors in the UK had just introduced a climate change bill (HM Government 2007) that committed them to a 60 per cent reduction in carbon emissions by 2050 through interim targets.

It seemed to me that the clamor around climate change in particular increased between late 2008 and 2009, bracketed at the outset by oil breaking the symbolic $100 a barrel mark on the second day of 2008 and later, by December 2009 when the successor to the Kyoto protocol should be negotiated in Copenhagen in line with the crucial 2007 IPCC report and in advance of the expiry of Kyoto in 2012.

In the business literature, one might consider these events as x-factors (Schuler 2001, 3) (as opposed to institutional, strategic, organizational/behavioral factors) in a corporate political cycle indirectly determining these firms’ political actions that in the style of ‘punctuated equilibrium’ (Baumgartner et al. 2009, 35) might assist sweeping new thinking to overcome for a time, the ‘friction’ of the status-quo.

BFR was highly aware of the unfolding circumstances. From a booklet guiding member companies’ on a range of environmental issues from efficient use of resources to waste management, in 2008 and 2009, BFR’s activities on environment seemed to take on more urgency, centered on climate change, targeting government and corporate CEOs about ‘transformational change.’

The goals oriented to ‘environmental improvement’ lent itself to a diverse range of applications—an appealing prospect for companies who relish ‘strategic flexibility,’ (Hitt, Keats, and DeMarie 1998) where they mold their responses around core competencies. Arguably, adopting this kind of approach to sustainability lends itself to Kirsch’s (2010) argument that companies are sometimes pursuing “weak sustainability” (91) (or a tokenistic approach that can still employ the robust-sounding word ‘sustainability’)—thus confirming the word ‘sustainability’ as a “strategically deployable shifter” in linguistics terms (Urciuoli 2003)—which is adaptable to a range of meanings and in the extreme, emptied of its ecological aspects (Kirsch 2010, 92).

Nonetheless, environment as a broad category of diverse issues seemed to become organized under and motivated by the problem of climate change addressing all the related and interconnected issues of estimating and reducing carbon emissions from particular activities, estimating and reducing energy use, estimating and reducing water use and factoring these issues into transport, protecting biodiversity, making procurement sustainable and more.

By April 2009, there was a whirlwind of activity. Welcoming a group of company executives on a visit to a multinational to learn about its environmental efforts, BFR's chief executive listed her organization's activities on environment and its "focus on climate change." They included: a meeting of Irish CEOs in October 2008; a subsequent survey of the CEOs which was the basis of a report in March 2009; meeting government to describe the report's recommendations; the formation of a corporate leader's group to identify a business position on climate change; and organizing additional best practice demonstrations between companies.

The day after that event in April, I accompanied BFR's chief executive to present to an Oireachtas [Houses of Parliament] Joint Committee on Climate Change and Energy Security where she discussed the recommendations of the March report. The launch of the corporate leaders group that she mentioned occurred soon after, in May and would focus on developing a communiqué to government in time for the December post-Kyoto negotiations in Copenhagen. This was followed two weeks later by a well-attended seminar on companies' initiatives on water use reductions. Before any of these events, in March, an Environmental Working Group among members had heard a presentation from one company describing its efforts to begin engaging with environmental issues. The following week, a sustainable procurement seminar hosted the Climate Change Manager of retailer Marks & Spencer who described for peers that company's radical 'Plan A' to address climate change.

The Work on Numbers

Throughout these events, I was struck by the intense activity around the environmental pillar. It seemed like companies had found their CR groove, embracing the challenges of environment at a pace unlike the other CR categories such as workplace, community or marketplace. At the heart of this seemed to be numbers, proliferating and accompanied by promises, documentation and programs of activity.

It seemed that all that had to be done to initiate a flurry of corporate investment was to repeat some of the figures from either the Stern report or the IPCC (and there were a lot of just such presentations) and companies were galvanized into action, as if nothing more needed to be said. Of course, it was more complicated than that and as Christmann (2004) documents, a range of stakeholder pressures come to bear on whether and how companies change their environmental approaches. However with the presence of numbers there was a feeling of certainty, that we had numbers and we could probably show change in the numbers – thus an outcome and the seemingly smooth functioning of audit machinery and rationality from tracking down the carbon molecule, counting and measuring changes in carbon numbers and in peoples' actions. For me such appearances begged the question as to the link between numbers and ethics or changes in people's disposition to action.

I follow this question in more detail through three arenas—how companies were trying to forge environmental numbers in the first place, how staff in two companies seemed to be relating to such numbers and a closer look at how two people with deep environmental commitments were fashioning their ethic of environment (the parameters of which I discuss in detail on page 75) and the role that numbers had therein[1].

Crisscrossing these three arenas was a subtle and tricky relationship between the production and consumption of numbers. A great deal of the intense activity at the level of companies was typically about one or the other or both of two objectives: 1) to establish (produce) environmental numbers that would have some level of agreement (consumable) among peer companies and stakeholders and 2) to deploy environmental numbers throughout the organization itself—also a process of consumption. By ‘consumable’ I mean that the numbers were made available, acceptable and more importantly usable or meaningful to action as information that people could adopt and work with, fit into their lives and their actions. This did not guarantee that the numbers *would be* consumed but they were carefully prepared to be as consumable as possible. As we shall see it also seemed that consumability was also a criterion of a properly *produced* number.

In meetings amongst themselves, companies discussed the numbers and the effort to even come up with them and secondly, taking the issue of carbon footprint as an example, they yearned for an agreed measurement for the numbers. At the level of companies, the production and consumption of numbers was not straightforward.

As that project failed or at least, seemed no closer to resolution, internally they seemed to deploy the numbers anyway for staff (and their families’) consumption. CR practices in general are thought to provide valuable internal staff benefits (Branco and Rodrigues 2006; Googins, Mirvis, and Rochlin 2007; Maignan, Ferrell, and Hult 1999; M. E. Porter and Kramer 2006; Stawiski, Deal, and Gentry 2010)—an approach that informs the other arenas discussed in this dissertation, particularly Chapter 2 on Workplace. The value of CR activities can be measured qualitatively by indicators such as employee satisfaction and quantitatively by employee retention for example.

Specifically in this case, corporate objectives to improve the environmental numbers could also be aligned with employee benefits; reducing companies’ energy use or water use should mean helping employees to reduce their energy or water use, even at home. In one particular company, there seemed to be a perfect marriage of corporate ambition and personal buy-in. It seemed as if the numbers were successfully consumed (therefore well-produced) and indeed in the process of producing new numbers representing change.

From the point of view of staff and people it looked a little different. Numbers seemed to have a role in either facilitating the company's conduct of their conduct or in supporting synergies between their ethics and company ambitions as a meeting of minds, not a fashioning by or of one another. In the two cases that I discuss later, the consumption of numbers was partial: staff whose conduct was being conducted did not fully 'own' them, could easily let them go. But even in the case of 'the perfect marriage' above, where people allowed a role for numbers in an ethical field (in other words there was some consumption of these numbers) they were not the whole picture, not the ultimate determinant of their ethic of environment. Two interlocutors, that I also discuss later, cited the difficulty in consuming numbers in such a way that showed the numbers to be intrinsically flawed, impossible to produce or badly produced and likely to produce only partially but these interlocutors' ethics, their work to become a different subject, continued anyway.

Throughout, the evidence was that where numbers could not be made consumable—among peer companies or among people—they would never be fully produced and vice versa. Companies took this problem seriously and strove to make numbers that were also consumable. This seemed most possible among employees. However while the numbers were more and less consumable (and more and less well produced) in the opinion of people as staff too, this was less of a concern to the ethical work they were doing to change themselves and their own approach to environment. The flawed numbers served a purpose but peoples' ethical work was more dependent on other contexts and other kinds of efforts.

As such it is striking how close to a wide range of effort the numbers were. The production and consumption of numbers demanded perhaps an unexpected amount of work for companies. Among people fashioning an ethic, their production and consumption was of less concern but yet numbers were partially productive of effort of other kinds—hence productive or a catalyst for a great deal *of unpredictable* action and outcomes. The straight line from 'numbers' to 'action' was diverted and knotted so that at times it looked like one had little control over whether one would get to the action or the outcomes originally envisaged. I was struck by the stochastic nature of numbers.

For the rest of this chapter, in a discussion that 'follows the numbers' so to speak, I will touch on these interrelated registers and their work to act around environmental numbers. These were not issues of environment as much as of government. Where I end up is in that space between production and consumption, between an audit culture (Strathern 2000) and making things auditable as well as in that space between 'problematization' (Faubion 2001, 89–90; Foucault 1990, 10) and the telos of the ethical field (Foucault 1990, 27-28).

Producing / Consuming Numbers

Numbers are said to have launched many projects of sweeping change over the centuries, central to governors' concerns to govern. Scott (1999), documents in relation to the physical environment, how late eighteenth century forests were “resolved through its fiscal lens into a single number: the revenue yield of the timber that might be extracted annually” (12). This mere number was quickly operationalized as an economic and political asset that ruled out prior ways of seeing the forest—”the vast, complex, and negotiated social uses of the forest for hunting and gathering, pasturage, fishing, charcoal making, trapping, and collecting food and valuable minerals as well as the forest’s significance for magic, worship, refuge, and so on” (13).

In these cases the numbers might be said to have made something ineffable visible—certain qualities that had been hidden such as traded value and visions of a stronger nation through revenue from trees—and with operations, gave those qualities shape and in that sense, stabilized them, made them workable, packed all the necessary information with which to make decisions into two or three digits. It was a particular way of ‘reading’ the complexity of the landscape using simple numbers and enabling governance. That is how Scott reads it but to my mind, his volume is a better account of how catalytic numbers are—the amount of work involved in trying to create the numbers but then also keeping things so described, in line with the numbers thereafter—in other words consuming the numbers again (to produce new ones).

When it came to corporate regard for climate change, numbers too seemed central to the way forward. The role for numbers in corporate endeavors is not so surprising and indeed it is perhaps an important contributor to understanding their relish in the environmental arena as well as their sense of frustration. The challenges laid down by CR advocates to be more energy efficient and so on, could be translated into costs and savings on the balance sheet. Being responsible or contributing to saving the planet was a beautiful complement that made the task more attractive personally and perhaps a little easier to propose. In theory it should have been easier to implement too.

Taking carbon as a particular example that was under discussion during fieldwork, there was a great faith that there were regularities to be found in how carbon would behave if only one was sure one had the right measure of it, which went very well with an idea of an ordered world climate, an anthropomorphised Gaia (Lovelock 2007) for which carbon was a proxy, an order that quite providentially was going to come back and bite us for our carbon sins. Our co-production of our world-gone-wrong ironically powered dreams of a ‘return to control’ through renewed regimes and mastery over that discrete molecule. It had to be tracked down in our actions and our actions changed so that it could never be produced again. The only way to know one had done that was to know how much there was initially and how much there was after actions had been changed—in other words carbon needed to be measured.

In several venues with diverse speakers, the adage of “what gets measured gets managed” was repeated in response to carbon as if it was obvious to the attendees. There were a couple of steps involved. To count carbon, to produce a number, first companies had to accept the assumptions about carbon and climate change (most did in my interviews) or at least feel that it was taken seriously enough by stakeholders to need to do something about it. Then, the theory was that counting would have two moments – counting at the outset and a second counting after action permitted operations on the initial benchmark. This comparison was the fundamental of measurement. As such it is the basis for assessing status and changes in actions towards new targets.

Then, the next step should be to approach the promise of audit, a systematic methodology across companies for verifying the counts and for replicating the whole process in new settings, a process most familiar from company accounting. Epistemologically, counting, measurement and audit go together and function to provide a level of usefulness in numbers that is the basis for action within companies and across groups of them—setting them up to rival one another's carbon-reduction performances, vying to be the leader for audiences of regulators, customers and suppliers in connections that spanned the globe. According to Schuler and Christmann (2011, 146) the legitimacy of companies, which is a perception by another party, rises with audits, especially third-party audits (though some observers such as consumers may be differentiated according to their willingness to pay a premium for the extra enforcement involved and companies may be differentiated according to the level of their compliance with standards achieved such as the ISO series – cf. Christmann and Taylor 2006.) Nonetheless together, counting, measurement and audit into standards are expected to legitimize or facilitate the use of distilled numbers to govern.

However in a way, during my fieldwork, the neat or inexorable trajectory from counting to measurement to audit (see Power 1999) was stalled or at least companies were moving so slowly through it that it looked that way. It was clear to my interlocutors as they struggled to reach that goal that the word 'audit' glossed over many uncertainties.

This became clear in several ways. First of all there was the sheer epistemological problem of 'counting' the environment. How does one produce environmental numbers? What does it mean to know one's impact on the environment, let alone lessen it, when this has never before been an issue? Where does one start? What does one count at the outset and then again, to create measurement? As one CR executive said, "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time." And she had retreated to this consolation after airing her ambition to improve the environment and save money at the same time while recognizing that the only way to ensure a big difference was "going to take measurement and that's the challenge that we have... It's very very sort of energy intensive. It's extraordinarily expensive in capital." Size, cost, unknowability. Deep breaths. Small steps.

The effort of getting to grips with counting the environment was evident among the executives of an Irish multinational packaging company, Smurfit Kappa Group plc, that I interviewed in 2008. They discussed the production of their first sustainability report. You might think that a company that was using quantities of fossil fuels in their processes should have a good grasp on what their environmental impact was, including their carbon footprint. Certain sites did depending on their function and because of reporting compliances that they had to meet so there were some figures available when the group executives went looking for them.

But for the company at group level, the first problem was to identify what the company was dealing with – what shape, color or smell the target was, where it was to be found and what the company would do about it—indeed what the implications would be for the company to do anything about it. In response to a question about whether different external pressures, such as new stock indices focused on sustainability were coming to bear, the Sustainability Manager said this:

> we will over a period of time probably become associated with those but we really need to get our own house reasonably in order ... [One] thing we learned very quickly was to try and capture key information from [the different sites]. That's a major task and we largely achieved that... but that was a massive amount of work. I had to put a team of people in place... where we captured all the information. We had to audit the information, make sure it was correct. A lot

> of the information coming in just didn't make sense. We had to send it back. So we sat down at a fairly early stage and decided that we needed an IT based environmental reporting system and that system will be in place to capture all the information ... going forward we're going to capture that information on a quarterly basis... so it will be quarter one cumulative, quarter two and cumulative, quarter three and cumulative

Despite my somewhat leading question that assumed a level of audit already or a level of widespread agreement on what was recognizable as knowledge, the executive seemed to be a step behind that, still in the process of *trying* to count, still keen to get his "own house reasonably in order", figuring out what to numbers to select from this huge problem for the first time.

A colleague of his added that "The main job, the main task of producing the report and it's a bit like when the CSO [Central Statistics Office] produces the consumer price index. They come out with one figure and people don't realize the amount of work that goes into it – the collation of data to find out exactly what we were doing – you know in terms of discharges and emissions and stuff …So a lot of it was formulating what data we ask for and the collation and the gathering of that data."

While their data gathering and auditing has become more sophisticated since then, as their Chief Executive noted in the foreword to that first report, "The primary purpose of our first Sustainability Report is to identify the areas we consider relevant to the concepts of sustainability, the extent of our activities in these particular areas, the *measures we consider appropriate* to promote compliance and progression, and the status of our current performance. We consider this report to be a baseline from which [the company] will seek to go forward with the ultimate objective of achieving 'best in class' status over time and where appropriate" (my emphasis).

There is a problem with selecting numbers however and that is to do with how one must select numbers that are also consumable. This is key to how audit works and auditable was what these executives were aiming for. As discussed by Power (1996; 1999) audit is a social construct that selects or produces for counting numbers that *can* be counted, verified (with a wide range of observers in mind), and compared—with one another or other equivalents. In other words the “negotiation of a legitimate and institutionally acceptable knowledge base” goes hand in hand with the “creation of environments which are receptive to this knowledge base” (Power 1996, 289). The production of numbers is done with their consumption in mind. They are produced to be consumable, useful, readable. They are not necessarily pure unadulterated counts oriented only to what is ‘out there’.

And it is clear from the accounts above that these company executives were creating or producing data by selecting “the measures [they] consider appropriate” and that they wanted the data to be auditable in an “IT based environmental reporting system” into which these selections would fit as knowledge and where they would be regularly picked up as the company did its business—available for the company itself and the world to consume. However, while it might choose or produce numbers for internal consumption, there was a wider problem: companies were still trying to work out the numbers to be selected (produced) in order to be consumable *externally* and therefore properly auditable.

On an aside it is noteworthy how these executives’ activities suggest the dissemination of audit expertise. They are thinking in terms of setting up an audit system—as if that was the self-evident next step, that this is simply how business is done

—but *without* being audit experts or auditors. Hence the veil around audit that Power suggests is there is torn. Power (1999) describes audit as “essentially obscure” (27) where “the lid stays on the black box of auditing practice because it has become essential to programmes for control and public accountability” (40). His argument for the black box of audit is stacked upon the premise of an expert auditor who may defer to longer strings of other experts to confirm counts (78). Then, “as systems become the primary focus for inspectors and auditors, technical difficulties of performance measurement become invisible” (60). In other words, auditors don’t see the basic problems of counting anymore as they become removed from counting and concentrate on the audit systems.

However in my case among the internal company executives trying to prepare for audit, they were not experts deferring to other experts where counting gets invisible. They were pulled in from other company roles and they were at the coalface trying to activate the company to count (not sample as auditors do) while also knowing what they should be aiming for—consumable as ‘auditable and verifiable.’ However whether their amateur efforts or the absence of a transcendent auditor role in this new environmental arena had anything to do with it or not, there was no audit system there yet because of the external problems between companies which I will discuss shortly.

On a further brief theoretical aside, with all this discussion of selections from the environment, one cannot help but think of Luhmann’s (1996) discussion of the difference between system and environment or more specifically between complex systems and their environment and how in their difference, they constitute one another (17). A system interacts with its environments by selecting the elements from its environment that it will connect with its own elements.

To render what these and probably other executives were doing in a systems idiom, by making selections we are seeing an Environment that must be rendered manageable and only being able to do so by restricting the story of Environment into certain details – selecting from the Environment thus conjuring an environment as a system or as part of a new corporate-environmental system that remains within an Environment. These executives are caught in what James March and Herbert Simon (1993; Simon 1997) might call 'bounded rationality' where the possibility of making rational decisions is limited because that would require full information. Instead, by adding a descriptive theory of problem solving, it is clear that executives " cut problems down to size...[and] apply approximate, heuristic techniques to handle complexity that cannot be handled exactly" (Simon et al. 1987, 13).

This selection to handle complexity is a hallmark of a complex system where "because of immanent constraints in the elements' connective capacity, it is no longer possible at any moment to connect every element with every other element" (Luhmann 1996, 24). Complexity and selection have a twist. "Complexity, in this sense, means being forced to select; being forced to select means contingency; and contingency means risk…" (25). In other words, rather than reducing the risk of Environment to make it manageable, in systems terms, such executives were increasing it.

But dwelling again on the problem of creating or producing counts that can be counted or consumed, there was an ongoing search, not among professional auditors but among auditees or company executives themselves, to find an acceptable measure that *all* companies would consume. Companies were still trying to work out the numbers to be selected (produced) in order to be consumable *externally* and therefore properly auditable. In this sense I am highlighting the instability of numbers in their *production* (as just discussed) and I suggest that this was both exacerbated by *and exacerbating* their instability in *consumption*.

This is a different position to some of the literature. Zaloom (2006) for example makes a distinction between the production and consumption of numbers as if numbers are more stable in one phase than in the other. She draws attention to how numbers are inadequately usable or predictable from the point of view of consumption, especially if one looks as she did, at how financial traders use them and the extent of interpretation that they have to apply in order to make market numbers say something knowable and thus predictable.

While the numbers may be unstable in consumption, as Zaloom suggests, I further suggest that they are also unstable in production. From my own data, numbers provide the tantalizing promise of certainty but ultimately uncertainty for the *producers* of those numbers in companies.

However Zaloom frames the novelty of her argument in a particular way that I disagree with. Zaloom wishes to convey the *instability* of numbers in *consumption* using the traders' examples. She implies that her's is a novel approach because in contrast, others have focused on the *production* of numbers and their *stability* in that phase—for instance where "Numbers have often been considered elements of knowledge *production* that increase objectivity and certainty" (61). She cites three key texts (Poovey 1998; Porter 1996; Power 1999) that have shown how "numbers act to (1) establish expertise and authority, (2) make knowledge impersonal, (3) portray certainty and universality, and (4) contribute to resolving situations of doubt, conflict, and mistrust. To use Poovey's phrase, numbers perform ideally as representations of *noninterpretive facts*. As stable objects, numerical units resist conjecture and theory and serve in the production of systematic knowledge" (61).

To be fair to these authors, I believe that there is something of a straw man at work. To me their studies show the extent of the negotiation required to make numbers look somewhat stable and never entirely successfully. In other words, to my reading, they do not assert that the numbers are stable in production which is what Zaloom *is* implying in her interpretation of them. Where I *do* disagree with those authors, it is with Power specifically and his view of the 'black box' of audit as if he, in a position of knowledge, is unveiling how auditees are blind to the selections and work that they themselves are doing and as if auditees do regard numbers as producing stable knowledge.

But dwelling again on the problem of creating or producing counts that can be counted or consumed, there was an ongoing search, not among professional auditors but among auditees or company executives themselves, to find an acceptable measure that *all* companies would consume. As mentioned from my own data, numbers were providing the tantalizing promise of certainty but ultimately uncertainty for the *producers* of those numbers in companies because they were *also* consumers of such numbers. Their need to consume numbers—their wish to read an audit report from their sector or from a peer—demanded that those numbers should be meaningful, comparable, related to something they could understand. However if other numbers measured different things for example, they were harder to consume and they also undermined their own efforts to produce appropriate numbers.

In this sense and throughout these accounts, as companies produced numbers, they were at the same time hoping to consume them, to use the numbers to show progress on climate change issues or to instigate changes on the basis of others' numbers. Much was at stake for companies in the results of consumption, in collectively showing the progress of corporate Ireland for stakeholders. However, for measurement to be readable and meaningful among a wider audience—companies and observers alike—the same comparison and the same comparators (meaning the count at the outset and the count at the end) ideally should be harmonized and meaningful within companies and *across* companies and available to anyone to read and understand. This was easier said than done.

There was a hint of the problem when companies began to seek correspondence with other companies and stakeholders. For one thing, as soon as one would think they had an environmental factor pinned down to a count, someone would ask, "But did you think of X?"

For example at one meeting of companies an executive told a story about their wonderful sustainable headquarters. A well-known environmental journalist came to visit and said that yeah, it was great but he wondered how everyone got to work!! Everyone laughed at the anecdote and at how quickly the journalist had pounced on the question that was becoming obvious to those in the room: there were more dimensions to this than any of them had imagined. Even though carbon was a discreet molecule it was invisible and built in to all kinds of actions that eventually led to bigger actions or actions that turned into things. To count carbon, it had to be qualified: in relation to which actions or which things am I counting it and in a way that will satisfy all my stakeholders?

The companies asked each other in meetings if they should count their employees' transport to and from work. If that was an issue, would working from home be a solution? The carbon problem of getting to work prompted another sustainability manager to warn her competitors about seeing working from home as a quick answer. Working from home only shifts the problem. People forget to consider that the home has to be heated—and only for one person—that the employee will use water in the bathroom during the day as well as electricity to provide heating or to make the occasional cup of tea. And should the company include these financial and carbon costs within the home?

These kinds of questions are what the Green House Gas Protocol (GHGP) would call a question of scope in relation to Green House gases – one of the issues driving intense enquiries about measurement of the environment in 2008 and 2009 in Ireland. The first four chapters of the Protocol are to do with setting the boundaries of what will be measured. “After a company has determined its *organizational* boundaries in terms of the operations that it owns or controls, it then sets its *operational* boundaries. This involves identifying emissions associated with its operations, categorizing them as direct and indirect emissions, and choosing the scope of accounting and reporting for indirect emissions” (World Business Council for Sustainable Development and World Resources Institute 2004, 24 - my emphasis).

The point of outlining the GHG protocol is to show how even one of the most well-regarded (read ‘rigorous’) standards available in this arena, (which was only slowly becoming *de rigueur* among Irish companies) as well as the relevant environmental section of the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), is designed to be flexible, allowing companies to choose from a full set, a selection of possible measures, hence designed to cope with incremental measurements and incremental management (or ‘scope’) as participants in an audit system *with options* across companies. (Of course what must also be factored in to the flexibility of such standards is the extent to which organizations such as the GRI, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and the World Resources Institute must compete for adherents to support their existence (cf. Bosso, 1995).)

As more and more companies turned to the issue of environmental responsibility, the more meetings between them discussed how to set up counting or to resolve what they had begun counting into one measurement. Early on, BFR had set up a working group of company executives to measure the environmental impact of Irish business. At a special event in October 2007, the group was to report to the Minister for the Environment. Following an introduction by the Chief Executive of BFR, who described "the environment, energy usage and waste management [as] the three most urgent issues facing society today," one of the working group outlined its objectives. They were to bring companies together to identify the best ways to address carbon foot printing and as well as to share knowledge.

Twenty companies had assembled around the problems, which included the 'challenges of accurate measurement'. As the speaker said: "It's very much a work in progress but the focus at this point is on measuring environmental impact and as we all know from a business point of view – if you can't measure it, you can't really action it and if you can't action it really nothing is going to be done and we may be fooling ourselves that we're making progress in areas that we're actually not moving forward in…"

However she went on to highlight a bigger problem emerging from the choices that companies were making in relation to numbers. "We're all involved in this area but what we've found from the collaboration to date is that we're all probably measuring different things in different ways and that there is a need for future action and benchmarking that we have some standards around this particular area and we are working towards those standards."

The rigors of environmental measurability would require selecting not just any old numbers that one could get their hands on but a standard set of numbers across companies. Unfortunately from her account it seemed too late. Companies had already made their individual selections. Another interviewee pointed to the same issue mentioning how she was working with competitors

> to standardise the measures which we will report as a sector. Everyone was supporting all sorts of things so we looked at the Global Reporting Initiative and seven other accredited reporting initiatives and we came up with one that is actually based on the GRI and we signed up for it... and it locks us into the development of targets...– serious stuff to try and get down to all the, [steps along the way]. I mean [one competitor] has come up with their figure so if they can do it we can do it but the one, the most important thing is that it's standardised and accredited.

And the Irish government was trying to play a role. For instance in February 2008, I attended a meeting organized by Change – Ireland's plan of action on climate change – a government funded initiative involving the Department of Environment, the Department of Transport and the Department of Energy as well as a range of government-funded bodies such as the Environmental Protection Agency and Sustainable Energy Ireland. This meeting was for companies. Eight in total—world-leading multinationals based in Ireland as well as some big indigenous Irish companies—sat around the table to discuss a carbon measurement tool.

The challenge for the campaign was how to come up with a carbon measurement tool that would suit all companies' needs. Their first step was to ask each person attending around the table what companies were doing currently. One was looking to harmonize their internal measurement because currently they were working with diverse systems. Another suggested that the emissions trading scheme was currently the only international measure but as that was only designed for large emitters like power generators he wanted a long-term solution that everyone could sign up to.

It went on, covering a range of issues either as obstacles to harmonization or as problems that hadn't been identified yet, touching on such different realms as language, technology, statecraft, philosophy. The meaning of phrases like 'climate change'; the depth of some companies' investments in their own paths to measurement and consequently, the reluctance among companies to change measurement systems already in place internally; how, when they began looking, the trickiness of other environmental issues like water opened up; how climate change measures could be harmonized across supply chains; how the government was going to assist; the lack of understanding of environmental responsibility, mistaking it for altruism when it was more a question of enlightened self interest where companies could also save money; Ireland's standing on these issues in a league of other nations; teaching consumers how to read 'green' icons on packaging issuing from different companies using different metrics; how technology could be harmonized so that one knew one was buying the green electricity one had bought. One got the feeling that if the companies had chatted longer, the range of issues would have grown.

As midday approached several executives called for something to come of the meeting, perhaps for the group to reconvene so that a standard approach to measuring carbon could be developed. Nine months later, in November 2008, the tool was being trialed in the shape of a document. But would this be the tool that everyone was waiting for? A longtime CR executive wondered out loud about the similarity between this situation and CSR in general - how for years, CSR as a whole tried to get ‘one’ measure but different organizations had their own. She wondered whether this would happen with carbon. Hence there was a doubt that the environment – and especially the *mot du jour* of carbon—might ever be totally pinned down, that measurements might never be perfect, that one would continue to have to make measurement choices and to resign oneself to be happy with them.

As of June 2011 those issues were still not resolved. The government had changed and none of the Green party was reelected in a massacre at the polls. In the world of CR, there seemed to be a different tactic emerging – an agreement on non-consensus. Indeed according to colleagues at BFR, the reason a company could not be certified against the new ISO26000 guidance standard on social responsibility, the reason the ISO organization had eschewed that path was precisely because companies had gone so far in establishing their own measures. At a meeting of CSR Europe in Brussels in May 2011, one KPMG executive made the audience giggle when he analyzed the range of different measures that investors were trying to understand in corporate responsibility reports. Meanwhile articles and initiatives abounded arguing for harmonizing within one the many measurement tools that had proliferated (Kropp 2011).

In these specific respects, the numbers—produced for and consumed by companies—seemed anything but stable. But despite the flawed numbers between companies what did people or staff think about them and would they be moved to change their environmental practices and actually consume the numbers (effectively producing new numbers representing change)?

Certainly all of these projects swirling around numbers—from Scott to Zaloom and indeed to my interlocutors—are accompanied by epistemological change, new ways of thinking about the issue at hand and new ways of working it among people. It is very much a playground for developing ways of seeing the world that convenience governors of various kinds. Indeed in many forums, just as companies lamented or remarked on the fact that it was tricky to develop numbers or that there was no consensus between companies, they would eagerly talk about what they were achieving within the company anyway and how central their staff were to that. In this sense, the *same* set of numbers about which there was so much angst seemed much more stable and directional, more consumable. But for me, that begged the question about the role of producing / consuming numbers in the fine line between being governed and being an ethical subject which I will now address.

Numbers and Staff

As the same set of numbers were consumed by staff, it seemed that they were having an effect on peoples' actions. To companies 'success' was told by the numbers and sure enough after certain periods, typically their numbers would improve. Despite the failure to resolve the metrics across sectors, in certain companies it looked as if they were producing certainty internally, as if the company had activated something within staff to act for the collective good, through the company. The affect, the moral imperative of preventing global demise, coupled with company savings (in the dual senses of saving cost and saving the company), measurement, and action—particularly staff action—

seemed to nest neatly into the ingredients for what one interlocutor called a crusade.

At every level of society, different arrows seemed to each point to the same conclusion supporting the collective good and with which companies could coincide. At government level parliamentary representatives were keen to frame the issue away from financial issues alone and in terms of a bigger battle. At the BFR presentation to the Oireachtas [Houses of Parliament] Joint Committee on Climate Change and Energy Security that I attended, the Chairman of the Committee agreed

> that it would be a shame to introduce carbon tax as a money-raising measure on its own. It would seriously damage the entire concept of bringing people with us in dealing with this problem. It must be seen to be a tax that will be spent to reduce carbon emissions and alter our habits. I sincerely hope the Government will see it that way. I accept that we are short of cash at the moment. However, to deal with this issue we must bring people with us. The power of one simply means people changing habits and co-operating. Without that co-operation and that way of thinking, we will all fight an uphill battle.

His comments echoed the government 'Power of One' consumer campaign which argued that: "If each of us becomes aware of our own power when it comes to energy efficiency, and use it properly, we can collectively make a big difference. To ourselves, to our pockets, and to the environment. By taking individual responsibility and changing our behaviour in small ways every day, we'll help save energy while we save money too. All we have to do is recognise our power, and use it. That's what the Power of One is all about" (Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland 2009).

For management ambitions the individual changes of company employees were tantamount. An interlocutor from one Irish company recalled how impressed she was with the "magnificent programme" of a peer on the European continent. "Well worth while looking at because and it's beautifully simply illustrated with icons and the orange ones are for the company and the blue ones are for the employees to take home to their families so the whole [company] family will make a difference. I mean that's central to what I'm at here – that if we can communicate this properly through the organization and get buy-in, we've [x] employees. If they can influence another 4 people, then that's [4x] people – you know?"

Another Irish chief executive was talking from the same script but he already had results, evident in numbers that he could plug directly into the company calculations of its own carbon footprint. The company had bought smart meters for all their staff who installed them at home and reported a 30% reduction in electricity consumption and now he reported, they had come back to work with the same initiative, sensitized to the issue. Rather than hoping change at work would reach home, this latter manager seemed to have tripped over the powerful idea of helping home and its affective and ethical weight with the employee, teach work. It seemed that the employee was producing and consuming his own numbers in keeping with management's own ambitions. There were many such examples, typically issuing from companies that had developed metrics (internally at least) and were genuinely trying to improve them.

Here the numbers seemed to be functioning as equations between action, or how we live our lives, and for instance, carbon—turning on a lamp, eating a fig while in a northern European country, walking to the train, cooking a meal. Behind these equations, in contrast to the project outlined by Scott (1999) to re-read the impoverished but pristine landscape as richness or as things now to be infused with money and powerful intentions for the world or Agrawal's (2005) investigation of the role of numbers in governing forests, here addressing climate change was about identifying the carbon entailments as excessive costs or the reduced value within things.

Or perhaps it’s also about the absence of values: some critics of our current way of life point out the dominance of self-interest (Gold 2010, 26) and appeal for consideration of “the economic ethic of a religion” (36) (cf. O’Hanlon 2009) or at least a return to “fundamental human values” (Holmgren 2009, 30). In the CR world, the concern about climate change and its remedial champions of carbon foot printing, energy reduction, water savings and more are in great part an argument to re-introduce idealized human values to actions and to the things arising from those actions. Of course one must not be fooled into ignoring the simultaneous process of commercializing on carbon markets even the carbon that we want eliminated and not even CR advocates would deny that this has its uses, if as a ‘stick’ (rather than ‘carrot’) towards change.

Nevertheless, where Zaloom points out how numbers have been read as making knowledge impersonal, here they would be aligned with the making personal of knowledge. The measurements built on them are supposed to impel personal action with moral and ethical weight. Before discussing an example of how numbers, personal action, company, national and global ambitions coincided and seemed to be produced and consumable within individual staff ethics, I should briefly give an example of how numbers indicated how partial their consumption among staff was (and how this impacted the production of the numbers that the company wanted). It was clear that staff had not adopted an ethic at the prompting of management’s numbers.

It was simply this: one company that had formulated management ambitions for carbon and energy reductions reported at an event where they were sharing their experiences that on days of redundancies power consumption went up. They remarked little more, though with a little chagrin, but I was quickly imagining a newly redundant employee standing at a light switch festooned with corporate stickers to “switch it off” and their wry muttering that they would “switch it off alright” before walking away in a rebellious florescence that Dilbert would appreciate.

This did not sound like whole-hearted consumption. These staff did not ‘own’ the numbers. Neither did it sound like ethical change. Rather, when the relevant employees saw that their contract with the company had been broken (by the company letting people go), staff also broke their bond with the company and refused to adhere to its internal campaign on energy. They stopped caring about the numbers—about whether they were produced or consumed. These features are not the hallmark of an ethic but rather are strong indicators of obedience, of working in line with an authority outside oneself until it was legitimate to stop consuming that authority’s numbers.

Rather, as discussed in the Introduction, according to Faubion (2011) the ethical domain is where actors are asked or invited to “govern themselves,” in particular making themselves “into subjects of esteemed qualities or kinds” (3). As Foucault puts it “the freedom of the subject and its relation to others” is “the very stuff of ethics” (Foucault 1997, 300). On these counts of freedom, the prior example disqualifies itself from the ethical domain but it is also lacking in commitment to what the subject themselves might fashion as an imperative.

Self-governance takes place in the presence of what Faubion coins as the themitical – something that functions for the subject as what I can best describe as ‘strong’ or perhaps even ‘righteous pointers towards change.’ The themitical is a normative force without being restricted to nor necessarily excluding what might be more commonly approximated in the term ‘morality.’ In the context of this chapter it might be captured by all of the forces coming to bear on making an ‘environmental sensibility’ felt, even if subliminally, and making it necessary and good. The question for ethics in this chapter is how that environmental sensibility is felt and by whom and what does one do in relation to it? Specifically, continuing the theme of this chapter and picking up on an ambition that was explicit in companies’ intentions, what was the coincidence of the consumption/production of numbers, personal action, company, national and global ambitions in relation to the environment?

The following example shows how one company—the Electricity Supply Board (ESB)—seemed to make these work in its favor but if the manager involved was under any pressure to line up company ambitions and staff performance in numbers, his own insight, sensitivity and other environments that staff occupied did the work for him. It must also be noted that the ESB is a state company where staff also have strong union representation and clearly demarcate their space from company space.

For all these reasons, as I see it, numbers and measurement were not presenting the themitical for employees’ change but were reinforcing an ethical appetite that was already well developed through ethical work and were partially providing routines for more ethical work. In this regard, I am paying attention to one of four basic parameters of the ethical domain described by Faubion (2011) following Foucault, the idea of askêsis or ethical work, as follows:

> [The first] of these he calls ‘ethical substance.’ It refers to that stuff—carnal pleasures, the soul, or what have you—which demands attention and fashioning if a given actor is to realize himself or herself as the subject he or she would be. The second parameter he calls the ‘mode of subjectivation.’ It refers to the manner in which a given actor evaluates and engages the criteria that determine what counts as living up to being a subject of one or another quality or kind. The

> third parameter is that of ‘askêsis,’ from the Greek for ‘training’ or ‘exercise’. It refers to the particular work that a given subject has to perform on his or her ethical substance in order to become a subject of a certain quality or kind. The fourth parameter is that of the ‘telos’. It refers precisely to the subject that is the end of any given actor’s striving (3).

The contextualization that the interlocutor provides below, as well as the very business they were in, seem to me key stimuli in conjuring the rightness of an environmental sensibility and contributed to making this company a viable vehicle for subjective striving or for trying to be different, better people.

There was something of historical national pride behind this company. In 1926, it was one of the first semi-state companies to be set up after the newly independent Irish Free State in 1922. Imagine a country just out of a war of independence and civil war, predominantly pastoral having only reclaimed the ownership and use of the land before the turn of the century. My interlocutor said with justifiable pride that they had

> harnessed the river Shannon [the longest river in the two islands of Great Britain and Ireland]. We put a dam down at Ardnacrusha generated 86 megawatts of electricity when the country only needed 20. The British papers at the time ridiculed what the Irish government and ESB were doing
> E: Because of the over-production?
> J: Yeah, and said that the Irish people would be, would fry in their beds because of all the energy they were producing compared to what they needed. Subsequently, we still have that 86 megawatts. It’s still generating 81 years later.

The Electricity Supply Board commissioned noted Irish painter Sean Keating to record the building of the Ardnacrusha dam and he conveyed it in the vein of Soviet Realism “as an achievement of heroic proportions” (visual-arts-cork.com 2011. The rural electrification that followed is also something of a heroic tale in Ireland, ESB’s own archive manager referring to it as “the greatest social revolution in Ireland since the Land Reforms of the 1880's and 1890's which gave farmers the right to purchase their land”

(Delany 2011). From anecdotal accounts among rural dwellers, few would argue with the social and economic importance of rural electrification.

There are other anecdotes of the ESB fulfilling a social mandate as they generated electricity. One such story relates to the later peat-fired power stations in the center of Ireland. Small farmers who were harvesting their own peat nearby would bring it by horse and trap to the power station to sell but often it was so wet that it was unusable. Apparently the ESB spent as much electricity drying the peat as they gained from eventually burning it – but their focus was on the social fabric and supporting the local population.

From that kind of positioning in the social imagination and in the practical supply of power nationally, in 2000, at the behest of the European Union directive 96/92/EC on deregulating electricity supply markets, the company was instructed to *lose* 40 per cent of its market share to facilitate new entrants to domestic supply by 2011. It was taking its toll but some months before my interview, the company had announced that from being the biggest polluter in Ireland by generating electricity with fossil fuels (accounting for 15 million out of 70 million tons of carbon produced in Ireland) they would be net carbon neutral by 2035 by moving predominantly to renewables, any remaining being there to "back up the wind".

> We would feel probably for the last 15 years since the introduction of competition and regulation and all of that, that you know we haven't been able to show that leadership … but this year we put our own stake in the ground as to what we were going to do with regard to climate change for Ireland and in Ireland and it's gone down really well. It's gone down really well in the company as well and I mean, I'm 30 years here and I would say, I've said this many places over the last 9 months, I've never experienced the level of interest and enthusiasm and kind of release of energy in the company behind what we're, what we've said we're going to do, ever before. People in a way, now this might be fanciful but it's interesting. People in their, there's the potential in this for

> people no matter where they are or who they are, for example, if you're a network technician working in the west of Ireland and you're going out on a wet day now to, to string a line to a wind farm, you can see that what you're doing is contributing way back somewhere to replacing fossil fuel to reducing the carbon emissions for ESB, to reducing the carbon emissions for Ireland, to save the planet. So the potential is here for people in ESB to really feel they're doing something worthwhile as well as just coming to work to get a day's pay if you know what I mean.

He intuited that the synergies between an environmental sensibility, this company's role and staff welcome for the effort, were available. This person had the Chief Executive's mandate and he had worked in human resources so he knew who was who. He began discussions with trade unions and he issued a general appeal for advice from everyone in the company, certain that they would have ideas because these issues were so close to their everyday jobs. As he said he "got a flood of stuff". With that he organized a working group to look at best practice, at what other companies were doing and out of that they developed a plan that was approved by the board and signed off by the relevant Minister a month later. Helping him were a group of 140 sustainability managers across the business. "These are our foot soldiers, volunteers, people not moving out of their jobs, just, just believers, activists who are joining me on this crusade if you like to change how the company thinks and how the company acts."

His language suggests a strong alignment between the company's ambitions and more individualized missions to be part of environmental change. The company had measured their carbon footprint internally—apart from direct power generation activities—and estimated that it was about 45,000 tons. What had followed was a target of reducing that by 30 per cent by 2012. To deliver on that target, they had instigated carbon reduction projects centered on "energy in buildings, around transport, around greening the fleet if you like, getting rid of diesel and replacing them with biofuel or with electric vehicles…We're looking at waste, we're looking at water, we're looking at biodiversity, a lot of issues around habitats and where we work across the country. So I've a lot of high profile initiatives going on that an awful lot of people are involved in."

However lest one believe that all of this energy was being released at the initiative of the company's production / consumption of numbers, another event is instructive. At a dinner he organized to present on the company plan, he was quickly surrounded by staff enthusiastically describing what they were doing in their gardens and other personal initiatives. "I was flabbergasted at the, at what I was talking about, what had actually unleashed in people to tell me about what they were doing. Now what I was thinking to myself, if I knew before I went to make the presentation what people were actually doing, I mightn't have, I'd have been too scared to make the presentation." In one particular case "one of our staff members has bought a 60 year old house and he's sharing with us his journey over the next numbers of months as to how he makes his house which is in rag order, a sustainable house."

There is a sense of extremes in his description, that even though he was in part responsible for instigating the interest in tackling climate change corporately, by his own account, several peoples' personal interest in the issue already exceeded or preceded his own—enough to even have bought a house to renovate—and this suggested deeper personal commitments predating his role in opening up such possibilities. As he said his role was to unleash the *telling* of those actions within the company, not the actions themselves.

At some level he seemed aware of this. Whereas I might make the distinction between changes in behavior because of being conducted by others and in contrast, because of reflexive self-governance, ‘ethic’ was a word that companies did not use much but even so this executive also seemed aware at some level of the line he was nearing between governing or making it possible for people’s self-government to be aired.

> What I’m trying to do I suppose in a way is to harness, is to harness what’s already going on and try and get people to talk about it and try and give other people the, the impetus to try something as well and to build, to build a an ever widening or coalition or group of people who are, who are actually involved in this but it wouldn’t have started with me. I’d have had no story to tell myself only very little really around insulation or using public transport or stuff but, very small stuff compared to what a lot of people are doing. It’s great isn’t it?

I wanted to know what kind of language he was using in presentations.

> EMC: just on terminology does the word responsibility relate to all this at all? Like do you ever find yourself, or does it form part of the arguments that you use...
> JC: in what way?
> EMC: appealing to peoples’ sense of responsibility or you know, we need to be responsible or no
> JC: I just make the argument about population growth and about industrialisation, about CO_2 levels, about temperature levels about sea levels, about ice, permafrost about increasing temperature levels and about the need to decarbonise by 2050 or we’re a goner. That’s the, I just set it off in that and then I talk about and in that context what ESB as a company here in Ireland did this year was, was timely and it was right. 70 million, 15 million net carbon neutral, leadership role, also decided to be number one company in Ireland. That’s me, here’s why I’m here, now let’s talk about it. So I don’t talk about people’s, I let people come to their own conclusions but I don’t dictate to them what they should do. I just try and make the arguments and then facilitate them doing it.

Laying out the availability of the numbers, the levels and the measurements as they have been produced for consumption (and one must agree that they are powerful rhetorically – combining logos, pathos and ethos) seemed to be all the arguing he needed to do to make the case for staff acting differently, as if the numbers would do the “harnessing” that he wanted without “dictating,” as if they were readily consumable and producing change. Yet as we know, staff were already active when he made such presentations and furthermore he wasn't just offering company numbers for consumption but 'public' numbers—the one's produced by the IPCC and other global environmental concerns. By mixing the numbers, he confirmed that he as a company agent was on the same page, that the company saw the same problem, had recognized its place in it and like them, wanted to measure, to act, to record change for everyone's good.

And it seemed by the "flood of stuff" already underway that they had revealed to him, that staff recognized that and began to channel at least some of their effort (by signing up as voluntary sustainability champions and more internally) to address their own concerns—perhaps about the planet, perhaps about their involvement with a fossil fuel monster—through their workplace. I suggest that the company, numbers and measurement were not digested as the themitical for employees' change but were reinforcing an ethical appetite that was already well developed through ethical work and partially providing routines for more such work. Hence, while no doubt contributing to the production of new company numbers and making such numbers look productive and consumable, the consumption of company numbers by staff is still partial in relation to their ethic, in the sense of how their ethical effort, their ethical production was directed by additional concerns that they had and additional work.

Ethics and Numbers

To explore the relationship between ethics and numbers in more depth, I spoke to an environmental auditor and to a CR advocate whose expertise was environmental responsibility and as they discussed their personal engagement with change vis a vis an 'environmental sensibility' the latter in particular portrayed numbers as tools with a part to play in helping conjure an environmental sensibility but as they discussed *how* to change, the greater part of their concern went to other issues. They highlighted the unsuitability of numbers to ethical projects—their failings—and *because of that* such numbers seemed to be intrinsically flawed, badly produced and unlikely to produce with certainty in this arena.

On the one hand, the environmental auditor suggested forcibly that measurement and ethics did not belong together (even though for her, ethics inevitably came into metrics) because ethics were so focused on personal senses of the good and the right that measurement modes could not be agreed upon and that had implications for figuring out *how* to change. To put it in Foucault's terms, in light of an environmental sensibility, for this interlocutor, the problem of choosing the work necessary to become an ethical subject emerged. In terms of the production and consumption of numbers, no attempt to put calculations on how people should behave would work because, a little like the groups of companies earlier, in the attempt to produce numbers to guide consumption, all the personal ethical questions of how such numbers *should* be consumed or used came up and stymied their very production.

So for example, I asked her about a new standard for social responsibility issued by the International Organization for Standardization, called ISO 26000. At the time we chatted, it was still in development and I asked if she'd seen it.

> M: I haven't looked at the information on that one and it's more trying to get some kind of common framework so there is potential in the future if somebody could actually look and try and compare but it doesn't, I mean environmental auditing or environmental, social responsibility, corporate social – like all, an ethical and ethics all tend to get tied up together so if you start one thing they merge. So I did an audit for a university and ... one thing is to talk to

> stakeholders and stakeholders. In a university it's students and alot of their issues came down to non-environmental, actually ethics – so when it came to waste. And one of the things the college wanted to do was to introduce waste recycling so the students would have to put the waste into the different bins and [I] started talking to them about that. Then they wanted to talk about using recycled paper products and then you moved into bioethically. So we went from 'Would you be able to put your paper and your glass and your general waste in a number of different bins?' to "Why are we buying eggs when we don't know the source of them?'… the whole thing becomes ethical once you say 'recyclable', what are we recycling and why aren't we buying recycled paper and if we're buying recycled, why aren't we buying organic or natural?... the ethics is then tied into alot of the decisions.

What was very clear as I spoke to these interlocutors was that numbers weren't everything when it came to ethical fashioning. The ethical parameters for my second interlocutor who advised companies on how to be more environmentally responsible were readily identifiable. The work he was doing in terms of how he lived his life seemed oriented to what might be summarized as to do with cultivating a more localized reliance. Achieving that was not focused on whether or not he could resist or accept others' rules about environment or whether numbers were produced and consumable within individual ethics, but about working on what I suggest is the ethical substance that was his ability to compromise. He was, as Faubion put it, not working on "a mere development or enlargement or diminishing of a given subject position but a shifting from one subject position to another" (97).

All the while numbers and metrics came in and out of his examples and seemed involved in making the need for an environmental sensibility and the need for different kinds of subject positions felt. At the very last, when I asked him pointedly about the usefulness of numbers he described them at the same time as both important but being "unusable" to a high degree. Being only partially usable, the implication was that the numbers he referred to were badly produced but as his ethical production continued anyway it was clear that his ethical striving was not dependent on them. Let me explain in more detail.

Paddy was always politically minded. As a young man, through connections with the Middle East, he was conscious of the political interest in oil but later as he studied the global interest in the topic, he came to realize that oil was political, economic and even civilizational: “In fact the West has no choice. It doesn't have a choice. Our entire civilisation is built upon oil [in terms of food, clothing, medicines as well as energy] ... That was the beginning for me. That's when I realised that to combat that the alternative was, eventually I realised, sustainability in its broadest sense. That's where I got interested in, that's where I got involved in it.”

His outlook at the time of interview on how to live was not just about politics nor about economics but about both joined and rendered through an ethical lens. His outlook was framed by his view of sustainability which was to do with fresh thinking about boundaries. There were two parallel considerations that we are not thinking about correctly: a very definite hard stop – sheer ecological limitations—that are shorter or nearer than we think and social and cultural excesses that are *too* short term, not long-term enough.

> The reality is we will live sustainability whether we choose to or not by of a civilizational collapse or by way of managed decline and that kind of, framing it that way is a completely different way to look at it than what it common among like in the business area and I suppose it's kind of a side effect of just the culture of business and the culture generally that we have is that we don't think in civilizational terms and we don't think in terms beyond career lifespan and so on – or the next reporting date.

Indeed he pointed to another of our social and cultural constructs (one that should help us to think in civilizational terms) but which is using the wrong metrics. Economics assumes infinite resources and is therefore a large part of the problem. There's an A but no 'B'. The future is way out there, infinitely and we are here in the short term. The two pieces never meet and combined, this gives the impression of an infinite sequence of short terms, a tight temporal bubble that as he talked seems to me homologous with the actual life space we occupy.

> We think it's a birth right in this part of the world to have individuality, individual choice and taste in terms of music, fashion, clothing and so on. That's a very very alien idea, a very new idea in human life… All those things are related to a very real boundaries that are out there that could be sustained if we all shared resources equally across the world but would we be able to afford a Hollywood. Would we be able to afford a mass-produced kind of music and so on and I don't think so. … So a vision of a world where we are defined or limited by these natural boundaries is highly likely I think to be far more rustic, rural, even parochial – village life where people interfere in each other's business, everybody's bored.

Ironically then to pay attention to natural *boundaries*, we should extend our *connections* with people. It is about reversing the temporality of the two parallel concerns, converting our short tight thinking to extended thinking about others, while shortening our expectation of resources. Equally ironically, specifically to address our short term thinking, for Paddy, the answer was some limiters. "[R]ules and guidelines—limitations on what you can do and so on are very important. They're a very important driver of sustainability, of real sustainability." He went on to explain the Amish community where "there's an association of a good thing and the word 'plainness' and 'plain'. So to complement somebody in the Amish community you would say that 'you're very plain'... We don't hold that as a virtue in our culture at all and yet if it was a virtue in our culture, I think it would have a fundamental impact on the way that we view things."

In order to demonstrate that impact he *measured* our productivity against theirs. “They without motive power could produce food on their farms in the same quantities per acre as the same neighbouring farms even though they use man power and horse power... I don’t think we can actually achieve sustainability without either creating a whole new set of cultural limits and so on, and boundaries or we adopt and readopt those that we’ve inherited from the past.”

We must note the underlying quantifications and relative valuations in his judgment of one mode of living over another especially when he links it directly. “The turnover of every acre, the amount of money, that value that he ascribes to the acreage or the headage has an implication has an environmental implication, a social implication.”

He gave an example from his own life of limits that help him live sustainably.

> It's my values that gets in the way of me consuming puts a limit on what I consume, when I can consume, how I can consume. It's those things that are the boundaries for me… It's a hassle and we kind of need the hassles. We kind of need the things to get in the way. We need the neighbour that gets involved in your life path, wants to know what you're doing, comments on how extravagant your house is and so on and what we don't need is the attitude of the nouveau riche and what we had in Ireland in the last decade with people building five bedroom and five bathroom houses because they wanted all to have an individual bathroom and all the resources involved ... Those things, the opposite of what we've done, the opposite of individuality, community, I mean there're strengths in community. There's a resilience in community. We eradicated community in favour of individualism because individuals are better consumers. They consume more and they consume more frequently maybe a lot more than communities because in a community, you know your neighbour is a carpenter, he does a favour for you. You might do a favour for him. There's no need to earn external currency in order to pay him.

For Paddy the crucial symptom of living unsustainably seems to be consumption because that signals that we are not thinking of others, not open to them, when he wishes to argue that it’s all about the welfare of others. This is tied to a particular view of the environment.

> This notion of physical ownership and so on of the environment has actually made the understanding of the environment really really poor in western consciousness. It is the other. It is separate and the environmental movement has been one of the worst offenders in reinforcing that belief whether it be save the whales or do your bit for the environment and so on. It's all external, it's all the other and it's not about us. I fundamentally come from the opposing point of view that it's completely selfish. It's completely humanist. It is about us. It is about what's the *welfare of people…* there are realities in the world that we are subject to rather than masters of and whether that be climate or the effect of soil degradation on the human food supply and so on and so forth. There's just lots and lots of issues that we're not in charge of (my emphasis).

Others were an important part of this ethical subject's becoming. Emphatically the logic of sustainability could not be about worrying about survival (because Paddy argues that we don't and that we can be quite nihilistic when one considers smoking habits and so on). Neither can sustainability be motivated by the fear of the shortage of oil. If anything that shortage will bring people together (considering that when we apparently had limitless reserves of oil "Western European Christianised civilisation ... turned warfare into an industrial process ...in the 20th century.")

Rather the limiters that Paddy would introduce would guide us to greater connectivity with others—essentially stoking an ecological awareness that crosses boundaries. Fittingly, the work he was doing on himself was not to convert an 'unenvironmental' substance into an environmental telos. Working on his ability to compromise would lead to a telos of a localized connector. I asked him what he would identify as the precise thing about himself that he had to change or really work on when he realized that change was necessary?

> For me, there was a particular moment that was crushing – it was when I realised that ideas and the people that hold them were irrelevant. It didn't matter that you were right about the train crashing, if there was no driver, it was still going to crash. The problems are so severe and so urgent, that there is no time for moral grandstanding or casting blame and no space for an ivory tower-like

> withdrawn/monastic selfish sustainability. It's very much a one in/all in type of problem. As a result of that realisation, I decided I would have to a) work with others that didn't necessarily share my own worldview/values and b) personally compromise on those values to get things done.

However despite his emphasis on connection, probably because of a particular determination to form connection that doesn't (yet) fit in this individualized world, he recognized (if not cultivates) his 'misfit' in a Western civilization. His own approach envisaged a long striving, building towards being more localized, more locally reliant and resilient—all the while, peppered with numbers, calculations.

For instance, his early research interests focused on micro grids "as a way of facilitating micro generation to play a role in energy security." Micro generation is small-scale generation by businesses or communities to meet their own needs and for which conventional grids are not designed and are therefore quite incompatible. He had worked it all out with calculations "how much would it cost, how would it work, how would you achieve all the technical requirements like voltage, power balance etc. on the grid."

In addition, he was home educating his kids which was not easy. He talked about how despite research that lauds the effectiveness of home education, the economy tends to push both parents into the workforce, though he has been able to earn enough for his wife to stay at home. Furthermore he was struck by the political intransigence involved: "class sizes are still about 29 or 30 children per class in Ireland." Home educating his kids was important "because of the lower footprints of home education because of the responsibility it teaches, the personal responsibility it teaches as a cultural change necessary for my kids to be able to live sustainably in the future."

He added, "one of the things that I find very difficult and frustrating is the fact that we live in a society, in an economy that doesn't even allow those choices. They're not easy to make and there's a real enmity for making those choices. It’s not really built around the idea of people taking responsibility for their own resources, their own waste and so on.” He related how he was trying to keep chickens at his house but it was against the rules of the local authority from whom he rented the house.

A range of interconnected values, met on the figure of Paddy, derived from his beliefs and his environmental commitment, it inflected what he ate, how he travelled, how and to what degree he engaged with consumption (e.g. no TV at home) and how he managed his home and family. He summed it up. “I think you used the phrase when I said that I've cut down on meat use because it's one of the biggest parts of carbon footprint, I think you said something like yeah you really walk the walk. That's the kind of choices that we're talking about.”

Numbers are definitely part of his toolkit and he confirmed as much.

> Sustainability is all about numbers. In fact, if you want to get away from the wooly concepts of sustainability that are floating around, you need some more objective way to define it. With that in mind, the first number that comes to mind is 0. 0 emissions, 0 impacts. That’s the only truly sustainable state from an environmental point of view. Everything else is a compromise between 0 and what society can bear and what is economically feasible. Then there are a whole stream of numbers that have significance for personal and civilizational choices: $10k- about the global average GDP/capita….what the world would live on if equitable, 4 – the number of planets we’d need if everyone lived like the Irish, 350ppm-550ppm – the concentrations of CO2e in the atmosphere that are reasonably bearable and that we are committed to at the very least, 86mbbl/day – the approx. amount of oil produced in the world each day, 90-92mbbl/day – a theoretical maximum production rate to be reached in the next 5 years or so, 30mbbl/day – the shortfall in oil vs demand by 2030, 90% - the amount of our food that is oil dependent…all these number inform big decisions like – “let’s be sustainable”…*what they don’t do is tell you how*. How much CO2e/kg meat consumed in a grass based grazing agricultural system in Ireland is it ok to eat/week in 2011? Is that different by 2015? What price should the meat be? At what price does it leach away money from other priorities? *Those numbers are unknown or based on such levels of speculation as to be unusable. Yet, in order*

> *to make really informed decisions, you'd need that degree of resolution*, (my emphasis).

Like the companies in the first section, he was aware of how contingent the numbers are but also like the companies, for the sheer imperative of action, one must take a leap of faith past their failings, past the "degree of resolution" that they don't have and continue to fashion dispositions to action.

To be clear numbers did not comprise the full picture, the full rationale for Paddy's ethical life. They are not *the* themitical against which he figured out his mode of subjectivation--rather they "*inform* big decisions like 'Let's be sustainable'" (my emphasis) and perhaps help conjure many facets of an environmental sensibility that would motivate the desire to strive for a new telos.

However, as for the environmental auditor, without the kinds of routines that could be convenient say between one's work and one's ethical work—as in the ESB—numbers are unhelpful to particular decisions and to evaluating kinds of ethical work that would be of merit. They don't "tell you how" and taking Paddy himself, neither did the numbers directly predict the telos that he chose or the ethical substance that he was working on.

Hence where numbers *did* participate in conjuring the ethical field of ethical subjects, they could also indirectly played a part in fracturing the kinds of consistencies or harmonies that companies wished to generate between numbers. Ethical subjects seemed more successful for the planet, more committed and longer lasting but ethical subjects could not be counted on to be consistent with each other because the substance they were addressing, the work to address it and the hoped for outcome was unpredictable.

Furthermore, the insistence that ethical work is a project of freedom—which seems upheld by all interlocutors—means that despite the corporate language that said that what gets measured gets managed, and despite the role of numbers in conjuring an environmental sensibility, there is a strong parallel suggestion that the less 'managed' the numbers are, the less they form part of the governance of others, the more freely they could be consumed, the more likely that people would actually adopt them as part of self-governance, part of an ethical field of environmental sensibility and *live* or produce real change.

The case of the ESB stands out even more for the synergy that it seems to have found between its measurement goals as a company and the routines it has been able to provide for ethical subjects-in-the-making within its staff. I suspect that other companies were in this situation and I know that still others were in the situation of the company of 'light switch rebels'. Ideally if one could 'harness' rather than 'dictate', all the better for enthusiastic engagement with objectives but the impetus in CR advocacy was simply to ensure change in the numbers whether stepping on someone's freedom or not. Hence many environmental targets were becoming stitched into job descriptions and performance evaluations.

For companies and for people and as these encounter one another, the environmental numbers were a catalyst. The attempt to produce them opened up descriptions, new ways of seeing the world and problems, the possibility of sectoral synergies, the possibility of ethical synergies and the equal possibility of conducting conduct—all the attempts to make the numbers simultaneously consumable. The work in between did not succeed perfectly but that nonetheless led to new production and new consumption, even if of different kinds.

NOTES

[1] One must also be mindful of a context of ‘performance’ where contemporary evaluations increasingly demand metrics and outputs. See Dean 2009, 193 or Lyotard 1984.

Chapter 2 – Workplace

What does it mean to create a responsible workplace? This chapter answers that question by describing the effort to make work do *more* work in Ireland. During the Celtic Tiger, certain layers and quarters within Irish wage work were taking greater interest in understanding and changing what work as a social and personal activity—production for a wage-paying owner—had to do with the rest of social and personal activity and existence. This was not just about productivity if one means productivity in the strict sense of producing for company profits. Specifically, connections for work were being explored with a wide range of social responsibilities, mental and physical wellbeing and what one model described as ‘life’.

I will dwell on how these efforts were articulated among Irish corporate responsibility advocates and executives and how these players experimented with change. My discussion will draw heavily on a seminar organized by BFR about work life balance and how it might yield productivity and wellbeing, even in a downturn. As corporate responsibility advocates, company executives and employees explored the *connections* between work and ‘life’ (to borrow the concept), work was situated at the center of an ethical existence where it was required to do more—to ‘channel’ more of life to workers while also *delineating* work and life. By an ethical existence I am referring to the discussion of ethics already outlined in the Introduction and in the first chapter on Environment in which individuals work out the kinds of esteemed subjects they wish to be. In this chapter, work was to contribute to this endeavor. As corporate responsibility practitioners worked this out, their moves painted existence as something coextensive with collective life centered on a person with many dimensions—physical, social, personal and ethical.

In this chapter the aspect of wage work to do with wages themselves is discussed little. I draw attention to a different politics of work that provides a proxy to the degree of change experienced during the Celtic Tiger and the effort to manage change at different registers—State, corporate, individual. Each was finding ways of re-imagining cohesion or solidarity within or between what is construed in structural functional terms as economy and society. In the process familiar elements that might once have been regarded as part of discrete systems—such as companies, government agencies and employees—became interlocked in new systemic roles. Now companies would be the venue for social goals desired by government, companies and indeed, employees.

The important backdrop to this work on work was a set of economic circumstances that assembled in Ireland for a brief period during the 2000s and that I have referred to in my Introduction. This so-called Celtic Tiger economy marked a rapid boost in Ireland's economic fortunes and in part, this chapter is about what opened up, what it became possible, indeed necessary, to talk about and equally what was limited when that elusive social, personal and policy objective of more demand for employees than companies could meet was imaginable.

I must emphasize that outlined here are very specific discourses, comprehensible and practicable primarily to specialized and somewhat isolated company executives responsible for managing corporate responsibility and to their external CSR advisors and at a unique time in Irish history. To be fair not even these 'insiders' would suggest that there is such a thing as non-statistical full employment—or real full employment where everyone works. One of the most prevalent indictments of the Celtic Tiger (and justifiably so) was how a hard core of long-term unemployment, poverty and homelessness persisted in Ireland while the Irish economy out-performed its European counterparts (Allen 2000). Indeed, while BFR advised companies on being responsible to their employees, it simultaneously ran employment programs involving companies and other employment organizations to teach immigrants, ex-offenders and homeless people about work and to help them find jobs. Another social critic, the social religious organization CORI[1], persistently reminded the social partners[2] that full employment would never be achieved and that it would be far more constructive for personal dignity and for social cohesion that everyone receive a basic income, whether they had a wage or not.

In parallel, policies to move Irish work away from agriculture to manufacturing and later to non-manufacturing, service or 'knowledge' positions contributed to economic growth and jobs creation, partly by attracting multinational corporations. That changing national company profile corresponded with an increasing interest in the relationship between business and society, spurred in part by tales from abroad of child exploitation and environmental destruction.

The confluence of these factors of economy, enterprise and jobs were involved in three further changes: First, wealth, accumulation and more work itself, meant that Irish workers needed more from work—more money but also more opportunity to live a good life. What I call 'life *latency*'— a concept that I will discuss further shortly but that is meant to refer to tackling social issues, issues outside 'work' as typically conceived, but through work-as-medium—was to be found in work and made explicit. For companies and government, it was an effort to create solidarity for a range of reasons—happiness, competition, productivity, costs, relevance. For companies specifically see the internal relations benefits of CSR discussed here: Branco and Rodrigues 2006; Googins, Mirvis, and Rochlin 2007; Maignan, Ferrell, and Hult 1999; Porter and Kramer 2002; 2006; Stawiski, Deal, and Gentry 2010. I will briefly also illustrate a trade's union position for its contrast.

Second, the circumstances also lent themselves to use by corporate responsibility advocates to reinforce with company executives the company's *dependence* on employees and to encourage companies to win employee loyalty—even if that meant accommodating or recognizing workers' needs to give priority to life, to *separate* work and life. Third, for individual workers, navigating these contrasting positions marked personal accomplishments that simultaneously had a patriotic cast, proving Ireland's progress (cf. Rodrigo and Arenas 2007).

Assisted by corporate responsibility advocates in BFR, executives' reflections on how they did business and what the business was dependent on, as well as employee reflections on what they would take to be a good life, forced a confrontation between work and life and between risks that companies and employees should take or not. Out of that, just as Garsten and Hasselström (2003) question "the sense in which the global market and its accompanying risks are seen, by financial traders and corporate leaders, as disembedded from social and cultural systems" (253), so too BFR's advice would use risks to profitability explicitly to embed companies with workers.

Contrast that with the fact that Ireland—said to be the western world's most open economy and fifth worldwide[3]--was a hearty participant in flexible capitalism. While flexible capitalism (cf. Sennett 1998) is typically denounced by commentators and anthropologists for its lack of commitment to the local economies and workers it enlists, this chapter draws attention to the flip-side of flexibility—the effort, encouraged *among companies, to help employees to stay.* So construed, observing the dependencies between work and existence and conversely, supporting the separation of work and life, made good business sense. It echoes the perks such as transportation, “good houses, a bake oven, and everything in nice condition” (Shifflett 1991, 70) to attract coal miners to Appalachia in the early 1900s but in this case the perks are not material but what I might class as ethical.

Latency

A concern with the quality of collective life in Ireland and the quality of Irish peoples’ values emerged with the Celtic Tiger. This included a concern that life was being lived too much at the whim of the market, taking on a style that was rapidly constructed, heavily indebted, tied to consumption practices and that might just as easily be taken away again (Bohan and Kennedy 1999; O’Connell 2000).

Academically, this concern is visible in the effort to classify the degree to which Ireland has succumbed to market liberalism at the expense of social priorities (Allen 2000; Corcoran 2008; Murphy 2006; Roche and Cradden 2003).

The social partners seemed to also represent this range of positions. On the one hand, the 1997-2000 agreement *Partnership 2000* (Department of An Taoiseach 1996) for the first time stated that the competitiveness of the Irish economy was a pre-condition for the pursuit of all other economic and social goals (30). While all of the agreements had been concerned with social cohesion and social objectives, economics had not before been given such precedence.

On the other hand, in May 2008, one of the representatives of the Community and Voluntary Sector among the social partners, who was also one of the Directors of CORI (see note 1), proudly pointed out the wording in the introduction to the latest Partnership document, *Towards 2016."*The national agreement opens with a statement about, that the partners in government recognize the *complementarity* of the economic and social – first time ever. Now this is an issue I've fought for for years… [and] … well we have kind of as I say, written this particular thing endlessly and it starts up here – 'nurturing the complementary relationship between social policy and economic prosperity" (my emphasis).

Even at the level of the everyday this concern showed up. At a party soon after arriving in Ireland, and soon after a general election, I reflected on the recent election campaign with a journalist, characterizing it as being fought on the choice of either ethics or economics. As it happens, the party championing economic strength as the basis for all else had won—but she was derisive. "We're more than an economy," she snorted with some frustration.

Throughout my fieldwork it seemed that work was destined or was being designated for a part in delivering the broad catch-all of a 'better life'--some sense of practices oriented to the quality of collective life and not just to economic generation. Within the world of corporate responsibility, of corporations teaching others to be responsible, work seemed to have become the ideal channel to deliver new ideas, to channel new ways of thinking about Ireland in the world, about people in Ireland and how people should live. The workplace was becoming a site where individuals could take responsibility—for themselves as people with social and personal dimensions to their lives—but also, a site that was to be made responsible to individuals and their needs in a wider social complex. At the level of individuals, where secure work is often cited in Maslow's hierarchy of needs, it was as if job security was now to be taken as a given and now that one seemed to have a job for life, the question became, "how can we actually live better as well as work?"

I will dwell on that latter dimension of work first—what work needed to deliver for social life—by drawing attention to what I refer to as the 'latency' for life (or 'life latency') that was being tapped into. This section draws attention to this effort to invest structures or workplace relationships with new work by uncovering, as it were, a dimension of work that now seemed intuitively to have always been there. It now seemed an 'obvious' vehicle—to employees, the State and companies—to communicate and facilitate the dimensions of living a 'better life' and contributing to a 'greater good' (see Introduction) or to social responsibility. Thus 'life latency' is my concept that is meant to refer to how a new conceptual and political space was being associated with work, where there would be capacity for connecting work and social responsibility.

Conceptual work of this kind has not gone untapped in other sectors. Rose (2006) cites the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development who define the 'bioeconomy' as that part of economic activities "which captures the latent value in biological processes" (32). 'Latent structures' is a phrase used by Niklas Luhmann, drawn from second order cybernetics to refer to the 'blind spots' that a first order observer of a system will have by virtue of analyzing or describing a system in her way, by drawing particular distinctions. A distinction always has two sides—what is distinguished and what is not. These ‘blind spots’ may be made visible by changed points of observation – either through “the possibility of correction: the observation of the observer” (Luhmann and Behnke 1994a, 28) or through the view of a second-order observer. However, each point of observation will always have blind spots.

Being able to see work now as something with uncovered capacity, signals changing or new observing positions. This first section draws attention to the role of experts as second order observers of business in changing perspectives—the State, corporate responsibility experts and business people trained in other fields such as medicine. They offer a particular picture of the world that aligns social and economic interests and that threads that alliance from the scale of the moral or good life to the micro level of positive emotions and oxygenated brains. Recognizing the structural latency of work, these experts would tap into it to create new dependencies.

However, the reverse is also operative but at a different register, what I might call a psychic register. With a hearty intuition for Durkheim, these experts understood that creating dependency or connection unleashes what is latent. Take the famous Hawthorne studies investigating the human dimension of industrial relations in the Bell Telephone Western Electric manufacturing plant in Hawthorne, Chicago in the 1920s and 1930s. Interpreting those studies, Davis (1977) suggested that management attributed the uncovering of “stores of latent energy and productive co-operation” to people working under “the right conditions” (quoted in Brannigan and Zwerman 2001, 57). These were conditions that:

> marked a paradigmatic shift from a 19th century style of industrial supervision based on worker intimidation to a form of management based on enlightened partnership with labor. This was part of a major liberal thrust in American society that correlated with the arrival of the Roosevelt administration.

> Intimidation would remain common in management-labor relations in America, but it would increasingly be confined to smaller employers and marginal sectors. At the same time, American Social Psychology was shifting from behaviorism and external reinforcements to symbolic interactionism with its focus on actor perspectives and the nuances of meaning. Under the new paradigm, the relay assembly group was seen to have developed a rare interpersonal tone in which workers did not feel goaded by their bosses. The atmosphere was one of a new employee-supervisory relationship marked by a spirit of cooperation, in which “there was no longer any bosses.” Absenteeism declined. Group morale improved. Individuals were more likely to come to one another’s assistance. And production soared.

One might say that seeing antagonism as co-operation and dependency instead, is itself the work of experts revealing another ‘blind spot’ but it is work and output that productively releases energy that was once latent.

Following my description of how work would be changed from a structurally latent vehicle for social responsibility, in the second part of the chapter I will discuss how the effort to make workplace relations themselves more socially responsible was founded on newly framed dependencies between companies and individuals. However, paradoxically, that encompassed accommodating individuals’ assertions of the ‘separateness’ of their social and personal ties. In the third section, I will illustrate how this negotiation of dependency on and separateness from work were construed by one individual employee.

Making work work harder

The proliferation of social responsibilities and existential issues that seemed to be zeroing in on work during the 2000s betrayed a kind of fetishization of work—as if it was the panacea to everything. Indeed, at a retreat evening in late 2007, about the links between spirituality and the workplace, the pastor leading the group reflected on what life had been like before the Celtic Tiger where it was imagined that work *would* be the panacea to everything if only it could be attained. However, as he explained, now that work was attained, its promise was falling short and needed to be realized.

> With young people who are maybe leaving college, there's a real search of what they want to do with their lives. ...It's not that they can't do or can't get work but they're very unsure of what they want to commit themselves to and so they want to go off to Australia and they want to see the world before they feel they have to harness themselves to a mill that often doesn't produce meaning and I think that taps into something that a lot of people do feel. There's a disconnect between what they're doing in their workplace and finding some sort of fruitful contribution, finding meaning and value. ...[I]n the 1980s [before the economic boom] I remember the Irish pastoral letter of the bishops that work is the key where we're saying the real solution and the real need in Ireland is work and thankfully we have gotten more work and yet we have new challenges. I suppose as Gay Mitchell [an Irish opposition politician] put it at the weekend on the Marian Finucane [national radio talk] show, it's better to be managing success than managing failure. I think we need to look at these challenges in the context of something that we are grateful for and that we as a society have created. We have created huge opportunities not only for our own young people but also for a whole range of mainly younger people from all over the world and [they] seek some fulfillment and dignity in work despite the fact that there are huge issues in the work environment that perhaps threaten our sense of value, sense of meaning and sense of humanity.

In this account, much had already been expected of work especially when unemployment ran at 16% and 17% in the 1980s. Now that more work than ever before was available in Ireland, those who straddled both eras had a picture of work that was caught between the past and the future, something once wished for and now valueless, full of the promise of meaning but in reality, empty. It was to be the marker of success but it was failing. It had been the beacon for optimism but work was disheartening.

The pastor was tapping into a generally-felt appetite among employees for work to now do more. Gemma at BFR, who had experience helping companies to get involved in their local communities (see Chapter 3), echoed that reading, explaining that: “the employees of a company are very motivated but I think some love to ...identify with [their] social conscience. We all go to work for economic reasons, we need to earn a wage but also, of course there's your social conscience and to be able to explore that social conscience within your work environment can be very empowering and powerful and for a company to support an individual to do that."

She had ample examples, including one from a firm whose staff visited older people in a local hospital—a corporate-community involvement program which she had helped to set up. Coinciding with the annual December national budget, where older people's pensions weren't improved, a staff survey showed how horrified they were "...and so I think when they were partnered with an older people's project, that actually helped staff feel better about the company and ...the driver was staff going, 'Oh God, socially we need to do more with older people because the State's not.'"

At another company, Gemma reported that by doing more, by facilitating a connection between work and life, people had changed their choice of where to work. "[One employee] said he couldn't go somewhere else and get more money...[that] 'if there's a semblance to me that they care then they care about me as well – that [if] they care enough about society, they'll care enough for me'."

A set of related concepts and their shadows percolate through this arena—'blind spots' and reflexivity, proliferating risks that are also opportunities, contingency and redundancy that are also haunted by necessity and desperation. Put the examples like this: Rushed by a shortage of time because most of their life is devoted to work, employees want to achieve more social life at work. For example employees want to look after their health while at work or spend time pursuing an environmental hobby or to find a way that work can accommodate their family life. Squeezed by competitiveness for workers, companies want to please them to keep them while also being profitable. Having achieved a level of economy (and life style) that must be maintained amid international competition, as we will see below, the State wants work to be productive in particular ways.

However, despite these pressures and the necessity of doing something about them, the solutions of CSR are advertised as neither ‘necessary’ nor impossible. Some business literature advises companies to see CSR programs as opportunities, strategic advantages (cf. Porter and Kramer 2006). CSR measures are not required by law—though the basis for them is supported by some laws—and CSR programs come to feel like viable ‘real’ ventures, entirely possible, supported by funding, personnel, standards and so on. The word ‘choice’ abounds. The company can choose to make these issues of concern—the controversial ‘voluntariness’ of CSR. If it offers solutions, employees can choose whether or how to take them up. With all the choice, it reinforces the sense that spare room is being discovered, created, a measure of redundancy.

The amalgam of risks and opportunities, contingency and necessity, redundancy and desperation occupy this spare room within work emerging from latent capacity. As Luhmann says latency: “reflects the contingency of the employment of all distinctions” (Luhmann and Behnke 1994b, 23). It accommodates contradiction because they are not yet contradictions. Applying the quest for social responsibility to work is providing somewhere to explore opportunities that might otherwise be construed as risks, testing the viability of the quest itself. Tapping into the redundancy of work will also allow the social and the economic to be serviced in one, the risks of one to be turned to the opportunities of the other.

In the above examples employee appetites were fed by their company's participation in community involvement programs and life latency was found in company concessions to employees to devote a certain amount of their work time, to external social groups. In other cases, the call for work to do more came from the government and in my examples, the urging was directed at the company *internally* and to employees to position employees as individual conduits or as one player in diverse social goals such as innovation and wellbeing. As one Minister put it at the launch of a Government report on Mental Wellbeing in Ireland in November 2007, work was "the royal route to well-being." Here, life latency would be found internally to the company and internally within employees-as-community-members—to the extent in one case, of moralizing the social relations of wellness.

These ambitions were spelled out during two presentations at the BFR seminar on work life balance. The first speaker was the Director of the National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCPP)—one of a suite of organizations, reports and working committees established or issued by the Irish Government in the early 2000s to carve out a special role for work[4], but that has since been dissolved with the advent of the recession.

NCPP's website explained its rationale: "[T]the NCPP's objective is to contribute to national competitiveness, enhanced public services and a better quality of working life for employers and employees alike. At the heart of the Centre's mission is **workplace innovation** - new ways of working based on new ideas, practices and behaviours that can significantly benefit organisations and their employees in terms of productivity, performance, flexibility, commitment and job satisfaction."

Its focus on innovation in the workplace was derived partly from the Government's National Workplace Strategy "Workplaces of the Future" published in 2005. That document pointed out the need for innovative domestic production in the knowledge sector because, in part thanks to multinationals' presence, Ireland's employment profile was already transitioning towards a knowledge economy. To maintain that potentially lucrative trend would require even higher skills and even more knowledge workers[5]. It would also require happier workers[6].

The Director of the Centre covered some necessary ground first, contextualizing the 'business case,' the pressure for an improved working environment as a means to innovation—innovation being "a higher dimension of performance". It was necessary to think of Ireland this way, caught in the "global marketplace... keeping up with our customers." It is a question of economic sustainability tied here to a dimension of social sustainability.

She recognized all the companies in the room, "campaigning for greater levels of involvement and greater levels of innovation in the workplace. That's where we all come in because up to now it hasn't really been appreciated either at Government level or at senior business level" but now "it's becoming clearer all the time that what we do everyday in our workplaces is vitally important to our success as an economy and I think it gives everybody a stake in being innovative."

The importance of the place of work as a vehicle to economic success was becoming clearer and it was to be capitalized on through a striking solution: it boiled down to something that each and every one of us can be personally responsible for—

positive emotions.

> How do you conduct yourself in the workplace? Are you a positive person? Do you create positivity all around you in your teams and your departments, in your organisation because it is a very very powerful force. If you think about it, in our personal relationships, in our lives, in our families, everyplace we—as inhabitants of a social network in our lives—we either create positive or neutral or negative emotions but the power of positive emotions is now being recognised as really a very important factor for the success of businesses at every level. Because positive emotions and being really empathetic, sympathetic, positive, encouraging, they are the fundamental basis for innovation and creativity.

To my ears, this was unusual subject matter for business people and for the kind of Ireland that I had grown up in where kindnesses were aplenty but not this kind of self-scrutiny, not this valuation of and emphasis on sunny dispositions and certainly not at work. In old Ireland, the wags might say that innovation had come from hard work, some modest bright sparks and a stroke of luck. But here, there were no giggles in the room or reactions of the kind that Lucy acknowledges business people often have—a snort while pointing out business realities based on a more pragmatic view of people.

Positive emotions within the employee creates a certain kind of being with an effect on those around it; she is not trying to prescribe an individual ethic only but a collective one and as Lucy continues, she confirms this need for a certain kind of collectivity, for the individual's sake.

> So we are human beings and the research says that our greatest desire on this planet is to socialise and to be affirmed and to be working with people and evolving with people and there are greater risks to assess I suppose with beings—from being lonely and being isolated or having bad relationships apparently—at times of stress than for things like obesity and smoking. So any of us who are smoking and obese and are lonely well we're in a bad place but I think again we need to bring these issues to the forefront. These are the intangible issues in the workplace. They need to be tangible – they need to be up there, they need to be dealt with and I think they need to be part of strategy and part of thinking... if you had real involvement and a real climate of engagement with employees and looking after their needs, well then you're going to have the

> basis for innovation and creativity.

Making issues like loneliness tangible and part of strategy was also a striking suggestion—the governance of *absent* relationships, ideally one presumes, so that such gaps can be filled. As a supplement to positive emotions, honest conversations in the workplace expose and thus banish hidden concerns and agendas which divert creative energy. Bad relationships are "greater risks."

Lucy's appeal to positive emotions remind me of Durkheim's view (1995, 212) of the individual's relationship to society with an added twist. Obliquely nodding to our status as individuals, she indicates that positive emotions can reside in each one of us—as Durkheim says of feelings—and like them too, positive emotions are what bind us, what enable us to reach out to create our collectivity. Akin to how feelings are echoed and amplified into collective effervescence, so is it our "greatest desire" "to socialize and to be affirmed." We "get a lift" from it. It is "the fundamental basis for innovation and creativity." But unlike Durkheim's characterization, the choice is ours. We can choose that our dispositions be one of positive emotion. Positive emotions are neither necessary nor impossible.

Furthermore, not merely diagnostic, Lucy is making prescriptions as part of a government program aiming to create, if not restore, a proper collectivity. Positive emotions are a way of socializing the kinds of minds that Ireland needs, creating a consonance on the economic, political and ethical planes – achieved through corrections neither to one's soul nor one's mind nor one's body but by how one acts or relates to others—here, at work. This is not a mere correction to an individual for the individual's sake. It is the creation of an individual whose telos is to play a role in a collective cosmology and prosperity, whose disposition to action might be governed. This is very much biopolitical terrain, with a heavy emphasis on its ethical dimension tied to an ecology. Its biopolitical features are clear when one considers the next speaker who articulated truth discourses about the vitality of human beings (cf. Rabinow and Rose 2006 on the characteristics of the biopolitical).

While one might expect Ministers and a government to be programmatic the speaker that followed Lucy—a medical doctor and a company director—urged a similar path but from a business perspective and with an emphasis on the connection between work as a vehicle to a good 'existence' as broadly construed as global wellness, national prosperity and healthy brains.

Involving the physical body sounds at first like the workplace is being medicalized, a rendering that "inevitably entails a missed identification between the individual and the social bodies, and a tendency to transform the social into the biological" (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987, 10). In other words, in medicalization, the social relations of illness are reified. However, in this case, the conjunction of the setting and of the problem is deliberately designed to *identify* the social relations of wellness. It is of course a particular picture of the social that like Lucy's relation to mental health, neatly scales the physical health of the individual through the workplace to the family, the nation and the globe.

David's argument proceeded by defining wellness—making it clear that this was not about visits to spas. Rather, wellness was about things that "do affect your life expectancy, that do affect your lives:" it was about chronic disease. Using the World Health Organization's 1948 definition, "it says health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being – not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. So that takes a more holistic approach.”

Quickly an issue with social reach, he expanded on the extensive threat to wellness from chronic disease with some global statistics. In 1995, over 35 million people globally were expected to die of chronic disease not just in the first world but in the global south, in places such as South America, China and India. Cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, diabetes and depression are the killers. So, while the communicable diseases like HIV/Aids, TB and malaria garner the wealthy Hollywood advocates, chronic diseases outnumber them 5 to 1. Then he brings it right home. “If you’re looking at it from yourselves, you’re talking about 6 to 7 of us here in this room who will probably die of chronic disease. If I was a betting person, I’d go down to Paddy Powers [a well-known Irish bookmakers] and I’d put a bet on all of you and I’d probably come out trumps in the end.”

The world is happening in Ireland - but why does solving this global health problem matter to business? It matters because chronic disease affects the population of workers—those aged 16 to 69 and like an ‘anti-effervescence’ among those social relations, chronic illness in one person has the potential to pull collectives down – whether family or one’s workplace.

> It’s actually in the productive part of your lives these chronic diseases affect you. Chronic diseases don’t go away. They last throughout your life time. They cause debilitation to you yourself. They cause loss of productivity in terms of the workplace. They also have a halo affect in that they affect your families so some people, while they may not be directly affected, would be affected in terms of not focussing on their job because one of their loved-ones is actually ill or infirm from chronic diseases.

Work is part of the problem, because “[M]uch of the work that we do here, particularly in Ireland is sedentary. We sit behind computer screens all day and we sit there and we don’t exercise so the change from physical based work to more sitting in front of computers type work has led to more sedentary practices in the workplace.” However, the workplace—not drugs or medical interventions—was also part of the social solution. “[T]he big one is that we spend at least one third of our working day at work within these organizations and really what we’re saying is that if you spend one third of your life within your corporates during your working day *what better place* to affect modifiable risk factors through wellness programmes than implementing these kinds of things so that people in a wellness programme that’s focussed around changing behaviour, it’s really important” (my emphasis).

The goal of paying attention to such issues was not just wellness but to address costs. The importance of his initiatives to business could be characterized in a cascade: “[A]cross the OECD countries the actual trend in European countries is actually rising faster than that in the States so the burden of chronic disease is becoming unsustainable for nations financially to support but that will impact, down the line on corporates in terms of taxation – healthcare premiums that corporates pay but also healthcare premiums that we are paying ourselves personally.”

In other words, personal costs were scalable to “opportunity costs to the nation as a whole” when a disproportionate amount of money is spent on healthcare rather than on other development needs such as education or attracting new business to the country. At the time of his speech, the treatment of chronic disease accounted for 60 percent of healthcare costs.

Furthermore, there were productivity costs to the business. On the one hand, thirty percent of people with chronic disease suffer from depression so when they're at work, they're not productive. Such "presenteeism" is hard to measure and hard to do something about but the Doctor argued that companies *can* do something about absenteeism due to chronic disease which is much easier to measure and accounted then for 40 percent of missed work days. This is why the company he represented had itself created a wellness program at work involving initiatives around diet, nutrition and exercise. It's "about making this environment a good place to work. It's not to say that it isn't a difficult place to work in that we have long hours sometimes but it's trying to sort of make the environment as I suppose as friendly as possible, particularly around their health and wellbeing."

More than just doing it to stay inline with other companies—addressing the ever-present risk of being left behind—he advised the audience to see such wellness programs for their potential as strategic advantages for the company. Such an approach was particularly important for a company such as his. "We recognize that our intellectual property or the things that are in people's heads, or their brains, that's our value, that's where we differentiate ourselves so it's trying to keep those brains healthy and well oxygenated, it's in our interests also".

Releasing the productivity or value of these brains hinged on keeping them healthy within the social environment of the company and the family. Chronic disease was a large issue of social responsibility that could be addressed by virtue of the reach that is work. People are there to work but why not also make them well? Better yet, one can also imagine using that ripple effect in reverse, to help affect others in workers' circles with good health—a contagion of good health for productivity against the risk of the contagion of chronic disease and spiraling costs. The picture of the social that the Doctor conjured moralized the social relations of wellness, endorsing norms for linking one's body's wellbeing to a greater social good channeled through family but also through productive cooperation with other workers.

The NCPP Director and the Doctor both presented very compelling cases for 'discovering' work as somewhere that can be connected to concerns with life, biological and social, framed as personal and social responsibilities in the broadest possible sense. Then, freshly re-embedded within a web of connections, consistent with government policy and individual concerns to avoid ill-health, connecting existence—social and personal—with work situates the corporate workplace as a response to necessity, as a response to workers' best interests, as a place of social value, with more to contribute than just work alone.

In contrast, trade unions were being confronted by their failure to see the life latency in work. The unions were facing an identity crisis. Union focus on work had continued to dwell on work in the industrial relations sense – wages, conditions and antagonism—but since wages and conditions had been less of an issue for people in recent Celtic-Tiger Ireland, the unions were confronted by workers' individualism – in other words, by the inability to enroll them in union agendas. Focusing only on wages and conditions had only created a 'thin' kind of solidarity. One trade unionist put it this way:

> S: One of the problems for this organization is because you have this huge individualistic society now, it's very difficult to get people to act as trade unionists because trade unionism is not about individualism – it's about ...collective action. It's about people acting together to raise everyone's boat so

> its a big huge challenge to us.
> E: so how are you approaching that challenge
> S; ... I think we need to find ways of connecting with people in a different way that we have until now.

Earlier in the conversation Sean had recounted how the Students Union of Ireland had approached a union at the Dublin Coca Cola plant to support them in a campaign to stop drinking Coke. This was on behalf of South American workers who claimed that Coke was not treating them nor the environment well. The Student's tag line was going to be Coke's *lack* of social responsibility. But there was a problem.

> The problem for the unions here is that there's nearly 2,000 highly paid high quality unionised jobs in Coca Cola in Ireland so the unions were asked to support this campaign and it was difficult for the unions to do that ... [because] say [the union] supported the boycott [and] Coke lost huge market share. They couldn't sustain the numbers employed in Ireland any more. It would be very difficult for [the union] to go along to their workers and say "Well I'm sorry about that now but we had to respond to this boycott in the particular way we did because we had responsibility to your colleagues in Colombia." It would be an unsustainable position for the union to take and – there's that word sustainable – it just wouldn't be possible for the union to do that because I don't think a worker here faced with the dole could understand the union position.

It was as if the people in the Irish coke plant were no longer 'workers', no longer individuals of a particular kind, united against the boss with their brothers. In turn, this made unions unidentifiable[7]. A similar story was coming from unions in the US where according to one official of Unite Here, they faced a huge identity crisis. Their solution was partly to think about how to make their work more about 'life' or wider social issues.

> People don't know what we stand for. I'm very proud of my union but we in general in US labor, we're not political any more.... unions have lost their identity. I mean in part it's because we're much smaller but we have an identity crisis in terms of we don't take stands – really dramatic stands on issues other than what immediately impacts our members. What's our stance on what's happening in the war? What's our stance on national security? What's our stance on social issues other than the issues that impact our immediate membership and

> I think that’s something that we have to deal with... We don’t have a big enough identity crisis. We only expect the public to care about us as it relates to our specific members issues. In an identity crisis we have to transform ourselves as a union and that’s becoming – moving from an institution and into a movement.

I was struck by what Lewis had said. Thinking about work and life I would have placed unions on the side of ‘life’ arguing against that precise definition of ‘work’ that would reduce human value to mere arguments about money. But Lewis’s comments clarified that the unions had indeed focused on just those terms, on gaining better conditions and wages for the estranged machines.

But simultaneously marking a moving position, Sean noted that his union was “a much more socially focused organization now as an industrial relations organization than it used to be... the social policy agenda here has just taken much more prominence now than the IR agenda”. He was referring to an interest in more broadly relevant social topics such as the poverty gap. Additionally, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions site included its toolkit to help union representatives negotiate work life balance arrangements for members. So from a ‘thin’ kind of solidarity, it looked to me that unions were working to make solidarity and union value ‘thicker’ by giving workers *additional* reasons—to do with social life rather than wage agreements alone and derived from workers changing interests—to act in solidarity through the union.

Ideologically speaking unions perceived the distance of their position even from the most committed responsible company. When asked for his opinion of corporate responsibility towards the workplace, Sean could not envisage how a company CEO could make any other choice except the profitable one because business was ‘exploitative by nature.’ However, it seemed that unions and companies had in common an interest in connecting work to more, to similar issues derived from changing collective life—both in part, we might say, to thicken what was in danger of being too ‘thin’ an identity.

The CSR movement encouraged these kinds of connections but it had something else in common with unions. As has been suggested in the previous section, the dependencies between companies and employees were instrumental in some companies experimenting with changes to the workplace. Unions too were working on such dependencies.

Dependency and Separation

Among unions it looked like this. Apart from changing views of solidarity and collective responsibility, unions had identified globalization as part of their present-day identity issues. This was because capital was on the move—it was multinational—and it was in disguise in corporate finance ownership like Goldman Sachs. The unions were trying to keep up—not by picketing the offending entity because what was the point? The ‘bosses’ would bring in workers from their other plants. Instead the union would picket the company’s business connections. As the trade unionist Lewis explained, the question was “How do we act as one? Because they act as one.” It seemed that Unite was exploring an answer. Another trade unionist told me that Unite Here was a new breed of union, “a big global trade union- as opposed to a global confederation of unions.”

On behalf of laundry workers, Unite Here had devised some new tactics: “[A]s soon as we’d walk out ...you would move the people to the hospital. You would move people to the hotel because that’s where the money is. You want the hospital, you want the hotel to call up and say I’m changing laundries unless you sort this problem out. The only thing they care about is money right ? I mean that's business. So you strike and ...you move the people to the places that matter to the boss".

So, now, unions were also moving their ideas to new places. Lewis came to Ireland to explain these new union tactics. Indeed, he was involved in a little-publicized strike at a professional services firm – not because it was a labor offender but because it "spends millions every year on [a particular caterer's] goods and services in contravention of its own Code of Conduct." This was a code of conduct that the union said stated that "For a business like ours that wants to be a force for good in society, it is essential that we use our commercial muscle wisely and responsibly and encourage our suppliers to subscribe to high ethical standards." Yet the unions pointed out that it had contracted a catering company to do its catering when that company was alleged to pay only $400 a week to its New York employees. So the workers from the caterers in New York had travelled to Dublin to play off the client company's corporate responsibility in Ireland - to force change back home.

The primary leverage that the union was working here was not solidarity of workers in antagonism to employers so much as a solidarity of employee opinion—and indeed customers as well as supplier behavior—on which companies were dependent for being *regarded* as 'good.' Zoning in on the spottiness of global capital, this strike at least exploited the contrast of good employee relationships in one location against poorer employee relationships elsewhere. As the company in Dublin had won awards because of its employees' approving survey responses, the company was also vulnerable to how those employee opinions might change if the same company, in a different jurisdiction, treated their employees—even contractor employees—differently. Wherever capital was concretized, for unions and for corporate responsibility advocates, the effort was to create and hold the company to norms that would apply anywhere.

Corporate responsibility advocates emphasized the vulnerability of the corporation to its employees, its dependency on them for profitability and growth—and it was a global ‘truth’ applicable to employees everywhere just as Unite Here’s tactics above demonstrated. This meant operating at the level of the ontology of the corporation and helping companies re-imagine employees from being dilutors of profit or costs to the very category that made profit possible—companies’ most important assets. This kind of thinking was intrinsic to the examples in the first section—companies keen to achieve more productivity and better bonds with employees, as well as more social relevance, seeking to please these parties by facilitating employee work on the environment or with local community groups, or facilitating policy goals through the workplace.

What I want to get at here are the *limiting* factors on dependencies specifically with employees as explored in the construction of the model of work life balance. If it was an exercise in social responsibility to reach out to social issues through employees at work, it was also a social responsibility for the corporation to provide the facility for individual employees to take responsibility *for themselves* as people with social and personal dimensions to their lives. In this section, I will discuss the development of dependencies and in contrast to the Hawthorne studies’ “utopia” which envisaged “soaring productivity among cheerful workers who socialized in their off-hours,” (Brannigan and Zwerman 2001, 59) the acknowledgement of the need for separation.

First of all arguing for mutual dependency between employers and employees was not always an easy sell. BFR’s brochures on CR would describe workplace as “key to the success of any business since it is a company's skilled and motivated employees that deliver productivity, customer service and innovative ideas. The benefits that accrue include increased productivity and performance; higher morale, innovation and creativity, increased staff retention and being recognised as an employer of choice" (BFR 2007, 38).

Companies' responses to such efforts were often mixed at first. It was new terrain that at least fostered a degree of ambivalence. This was evident as BFR organized the workplace seminar already discussed. Marian was the executive responsible for advising on workplace responsibility with member companies and she was keen to bring her event to the level of discussing practices, of showcasing how to make great workplaces real. "What the practices are for becoming a great place to work – beyond the policies – so people know that they're there, what they're entitled to, that it's ok to ask? Sure staff wouldn't…" she started with a shake of her head. "Lots of companies have the policies but the staff doesn't know about them. They don't want staff to know about them. 'Oh sure look, we have the policies'", she parodied with a disappointed smile. On the other hand, she could also think of companies going out of their way to brand their policies internally to make sure that staff know that they exist and can be availed of. In one way, practice was proof.

Her characterization of how such things play out indicates the tricky position that BFR often found itself in. On any pillar, its role was to push its members not only to have the policies but also, to make them real, practicable, usable. However, the move from policies to practices for companies was equivalent to a leap from intention to action, from the cost of the paper the policy was written on, to deep organizational change at the level of thinking and of practices. Watching companies approach but refuse that leap made for a necessary degree of cynicism on the part of BFR's CR executives—an unwavering faith in the potential of CR to be the management philosophy that would re-integrate so much of business and a healthy social life, yet tinged with the acknowledgement that in actuality, its application often fell short. Humanism sometimes bumps into real humans and their machinations.

One of the obstacles is that 'getting' CR is not obvious for companies and in a broad sense, this didn't seem to be just an Irish problem. It seemed to be more of an issue of 'mindset', a way of thinking about how the world was organized—business versus society—in the case of workplace, I buy your labor and you do what I say. Marian reported that another CR consultant, Caroline, had just been to [a country in Asia], to talk about, as she phrased it for that occasion, 'work life harmony.' Caroline had reported back that those Asians were focused on metrics, measuring time in and time out and calendars and more besides – but that she was trying to argue instead for 'accommodation.' Work life balance (or 'harmony' in this case) is about employees knowing they have the flexibility to deal with something else (i.e. not work), when they need to deal with it. It's about work being accommodating. According to Marian's recount, those particular Asians seemed to find Caroline's argument hard to grasp. They hadn't thought about it from that point of view. As Marian paraphrased it, Caroline was trying to argue on workers' behalves that "they're not machines."

The comment reminded me of Adam Smith and Karl Marx. Writing as the Industrial Revolution was gathering steam, in *The Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith described the difference between work for business and for other domains (Smith 2009, 265-266). Just over 100 years later Marx, dwelt on his 'estrangement' thesis where a worker's work became the property of the company rather than a channel through which the worker expressed him or herself to the fulfillment of his own needs and desires (Marx and Engels 1978, 70). Both accounts recognize what had changed with the Industrial Revolution. The world was now described as one where lives had become separated from how people made a living and with it, humans had become machines[8].

Such divisions had strong resonances in Ireland. Twentieth century Ireland had a history of labor clashes. The Great Lock Out[9], which lasted from August 1913 to January 1914, ground the country to a halt with the cost of rioting and death. From that terrible Winter layered with the significance of protest at labor conditions and against poverty, workplace resistance became intertwined with political resistance. The Irish Citizen Army—a force of volunteers organized to protect the striking workers from police brutality—just two years later on April 24th 1916, joined the Irish Volunteers to take positions across Dublin (Conroy 2003, 22). With this 'Easter Rising,' they would begin the push that eventually carved the Free State (1922) and then the Republic of Ireland (1948) out of the United Kingdom.

However, CR would complicate those old divides separating work from the rest of life. Resonating with the perspectives of human relations—most famously referenced by the Hawthorne Studies mentioned earlier[10]--in work life balance CR initiatives specifically, the effort was to make clear the connections, the mutual dependencies between work and life, but I add the following caveat: only so that work and life could be *apart* or only so that employees had more choice on when and where to work[11].

Communicating this logic and helping companies embrace it required a balancing act of its own. Companies' initial ambivalence had reasons. A number of different ideas had to fall into place. For instance, as with corporate community involvement in Chapter 3, why should companies bother to change its view of dependencies—especially when it might turn out that such an acknowledgement could involve more concessions? One primary source of reluctance was the question of profitability—and it gave rise to as much confusion and skepticism in the CR world and among companies as it did among trades unions and other critics. What kinds of practices were being tabled? Companies make profits. Were they now to behave in ways that would damage the business? Should profitability be sidelined in favor of employee choice?

By 2007, the answer that the most experienced companies seemed to agree on in relation to new workplace dependencies between company and employee was 'no.' Work life balance was not about *more* time off as much as it was about practices that supported the demands of the job—*flexible* time off[12]. Taking work life balance too far would damage profitability and hence employees' jobs. Indeed, according to one public sector report on work life balance so many people in government departments were working atypical arrangements that it began to affect their operation. During a later interview with the CR consultant, she suggested that work life balance was taken too far by many companies who made it the mainstay of their workplace policies but it was too oriented to parents – to the exclusion and alienation of some employees who didn't have families.

Corporate executives would remind each other of these arguments as they explained their initiatives, as if they knew that the newcomers in the audience were still trying to figure it out. It's about finding 'win-win' situations, it's about trade-offs. At the seminar for instance, the looming economic crisis prompted a debate among the Human Resources (HR) people. Some audience members worried that graduates entering the job market now would have “expectations that are now far exceeding what might be possible during the next few years.” Another HR woman responded that seeing work life balance as a perk missed the point. “I mean if you communicate work life balance as a benefit then it’s always going to be seen as something that you’re given and something that can be taken away but if it’s actually a way of working.., if people are more productive in terms of … revenue because people help your work life balance, well then you’re always going to want that work life balance in either tough times or good times”.

Perfectly consistent with Milton Friedman’s position (Bakan 2005), who accepted any social responsibility by corporations that would not damage profitability, the speaker neatly linked productivity and profitability through work life balance. Rather than be oriented to maintaining a pretense that work life balance is an altruistic perk for staff as opposed to an instrumental program for the company (with the attendant worry that the benefits may dissipate if the ‘truth’ is found out) she is suggesting that companies and staff need to get past that. Work life balance should not be a perk in the sense of an ‘extra’ that a company can endow or take away but a perk in the sense of being how the company works – a deeper commitment that is openly instrumental for the company but that staff at the same time know they have a commitment to.

Another HR Director put the balance between profitability and employees this way: they needed a suite of initiatives for staff that were all,

> underpinned by what we call the ‘win-wins’. How can we make life easy for you as an employee? How can you make life easy for us as a business so we could generate the “win-wins”? What’s the business context in which we can possibly consider this initiative? What’s the win for the business? What’s the win for me as an employee? Can we generate that type of case in every example that we see around [this company]? ... All of this is predicated on a business case context and if we can’t see benefit, if we can’t see return, if we can’t get a measurable business metric flowing from this, we won’t do it. It has to win for the employee.

It has to win for the business.

Such discourses, encouraged by CR experts, was a neat trade-off, inoffensive to companies but effective. In effect, if the market was the corporate medium, then BFR's mission to instill corporate responsibility would reinterpret the market as requiring a balance between corporate goals and a variety of other responsibilities—including the personal responsibilities of employees themselves. Companies were assured that they wouldn't be expected to change their stripes *but as they made their profits* they would have to be attentive to those that could affect their existence because they were dependent on them. The profitability of corporate responsibility is an ally of the corporate responsibility movement—as is risk[13]. After all, how does one gauge the profitability of something as ephemeral as relationships? Stubbornly immeasurable, the lurking alternative was the risk of *damaging* relationships and hence profitability.

Apart from profitability, or the risk of damaging it, the obvious issue already evident in the quotes above, and in the first section earlier, was for companies to understand that they really *were* dependent on their staff. This HR Director was an advocate. He described in detail how the company had put in place policies and practices to address wellness and work life balance. This was because it had come to light in an employee survey three or four years previously that the company wasn't as engaged with its employees as it could have been. This was an important concern. He explained it by way of quantifying what the company sells—forms of rationality, ways of interpreting the world. This requires people. Its people are the company's profit. Echoing the Doctor speaker quoted earlier, he noted:

If you think about [this company]... we are only as good as our people. We sell

> people. We sell their value, we sell their judgment, we sell their intuition, we sell their insight, we sell their analysis. That's what we sell [here]. We do it through our product areas ... but ultimately you buy people when you buy [this company's services]. Therefore it's not too far to think if they're not as engaged in our business as we would like them to be, potentially we might be damaging the business in the longterm. We had to get engaged in our people.

It was an imperative that the Irish government would have approved of. Earlier, Lucy from the NCPP had summarized her pep-talk for positive emotions as the path to innovation and the Irish Government's "vision for the workplace of the future ... [as being] really about two big principles – building fit and responsible and high performing organizations but doing that by responding and meeting the needs of employees... [E]verything we're talking about today, [is] about the workplace begin responsive to employees needs, their needs for work life balance, their needs for involvement etc, continuously learning, being proactively diverse."

Lucy's emphasis on improving employee engagement was spurred by the results of a prior nationally representative survey of workplaces that the NCPP was due to repeat. With the new survey, they were going "to check again all those themes that build innovation – whether people get information, whether they're consulted whether their work life balance needs are met, whether there's diversity in the workplace. What are their experiences at work?" Of concern to her were the results of the last survey, where "50% of people say they do not have a satisfactory balance between work and life. ... 1 in 3 people feel tired all the time. Stress related illness costs the economy a huge amount."

For companies, getting engaged with 'their people' inevitably brought them face to face with those people's heterogeneity and sometimes in the quirkiest ways. The firm just discussed for instance: "recognise that across the [company] population a whole host of people have a whole host of interests – anything like tag rugby, football, soccer, netball, camogie [an Irish stick & ball game for women], whatever it may be. Let’s put together a team of people, let’s give them a few euro to host any events they’re interested in and let them make it happen... Every second year we host an event ... where people perform musical acts etc – hugely popular.”

Companies find themselves encouraged to recognize a ‘whole’ person in the workplace—the person as body, the person as family member, or as community member and as citizen—someone with personal and as we saw earlier, social responsibilities. The outcome however, confronted with stress and the risk of less productive employees, is that companies must recognize new forms of time away. Before it was even legislated for by government, this company had also “introduced a whole suite of flexible leave arrangements that accommodated for people because we recognised that people have different work arrangements. They have different social arrangements, they have different personal circumstances. How can we make the job easier, the hours in which you do your work – how can we make that easier to facilitate you coming to work?”

Ironically, recognizing a whole person means that the company also acknowledges that living and livelihoods are *not* the same and that valuing that difference is important for its future. Recognizing its responsibilities to its employees entailed this company recognizing when employees were not employees. Of course not every company gets this right. Some do try to use employee activities outside work to learn more about their employees or to claim those activities for the company’s good reputation. In many cases employees, especially where there is strong union representation, are refusing to divulge that information. The negotiation of the norm or of the line between work and life continues.

While a process of communicating with employees, developing an interest in their needs and responding to them was important, Tom, the HR Manager of another company, emphasized how his workplace facilitated the *separation* of work and life by recognizing ‘life’ *at* work. This was practical work to help people to prioritize their workload. “Workplace these days is getting busier and busier. There’s more demands being placed on people... Now the issue then is, we have to manage our workload better. We have to prioritize better rather than give more time off. We actually find that a lot of people don’t even, we actually have to encourage them to take the annual leave that is due to them rather than actually giving them additional leave. So this is more about trying to do more when people are at work. So the action that we decided to take was a [life-scheduling] pilot.”

Life-scheduling he explained involved everyone from senior management to staff. By looking at all the goals for the organization—including the ones emanating from head office overseas—they were able to prioritize which ones had to be achieved and didn’t.

> A lot of the time you can almost be a little bit greedy. We say we want everything done and usually because everybody pulls out all the stops to get it done that affects people’s work life balance on the other side. So it was important for us to say right, what are we not going to do from now on? And also push back to our headquarters. We’ve started more recently – like, when you’re in an affiliate within a multinational organization, I’m sure a lot of people are used to this, you want to create a very positive image of Ireland to your head office and say listen we’re the guys who get stuff done. You ask for something it’s done, it’s done on time and it’s done even better than you asked for it... a lot of the time, people are reluctant to say we can’t do it in that timeframe. Can we have more time? Or, is this actually relevant to our business? Is this actually helping us to do the business that we’re here to do? Or is it a ticking a box for at a kind of a corporate level? So we started pushing back to headquarters a little bit on that and they have been very supportive.

As Tom tells it, in the past, pushing back to headquarters was foregrounded by a responsibility to a particular image of Ireland in an international market—that of being effective, compliant. Now, asserting personal responsibility at an individual level will have effects for that image too. This filters into each employee's approach to work. They are encouraged to challenge deadlines and priorities meaning that everyone at the company is "actually starting to think rather than just accepting." It challenges presenteeism by making work smarter: people get done what they need to, so that they are ready to leave for home at 5pm.

> If you can plan your time more effectively when you're in work, that makes you hopefully you'll get out a bit earlier and get home and get to have that work life balance regardless of whatever hours you're doing. Supports the practice of planning and helps people to set personal goals for their life. I know it seems a bit strange – a course that's being rolled by a company getting involved in their own personal life goals. We don't look for the information back but we like, this course actually enables, asks people to think about what are your goals for your life? What is it that you want to do? How does that come into your career and how does that fit into what we want to do as a person yourself outside of your career and how are you going to manage those two together?

In a five-day course over five weeks, employees were being given the homework of writing down what they do each day and for how long, whether at work or at home. Was the person a morning or evening person for example—or what time of their day is most productive or creative—and they planned their lives accordingly.

> A person is just so busy on the treadmill they don't actually have time to be innovative and if we can manage to plan our time better and actually include time for innovation and for strategic thinking then, we're getting ourselves off this treadmill that seems like an ongoing thing – you feel like you're going nowhere. For me, my personal experience of [life scheduling], my planning is much improved. I work from home more frequently because there can be less interruptions ... Need for uninterrupted work is respected because everybody is going through this pilot and they understand the whole concept of not interrupting somebody when they're in a flow or they're in a focus. Everybody has started to respect each other when the door is closed. We do have an open door policy in terms of people coming in to us but people are saying well listen there is particular times when you know, somebody mightn't be accessible.

> Ruled less by email and blackberry. So you can kind of assign times when you will look at your email and then leave it alone for the rest of the day. I know that can be a bit of a strange concept to a lot of people. Personally it results in less stress. It allows me to make more accurate expectations with my manager because I've gotten better at planning and respecting my work life balance I can actually say well no, I can't get that done this week. I'll be able to have that for you next week. Now if that's a higher priority than I'm setting it, let me know and we can work on it.

Being a more 'responsible employer' involved conceding to employees the capacity for *more* personal responsibility, more room to take stock of their needs and to assert them even if that meant pushing against productivity demands.

The success of flexible working arrangements depended a great deal on trust. Are managers set to believe the best of employees when working at home—that they really are working? Or, one seminar attendee worried that her company could get bogged down in the issue of "proving" that employees *did* work those extra hours or that they did deserve the break.

Paradoxically, the negotiation of dependence and separation that was work life balance showed up as an asset in relation to one other company concern; that was through talk of 'loyalty.' During planning for the seminar and mindful of the growing concern about the effects of the U.S. sub-prime issues on the Irish economy, Marian saw the relevance of the event theme in these terms: if there was a downturn, it would be helpful to remind companies of the value of workplace policies like work life balance in maintaining employee motivation and loyalty.

Loyalty is a curious idea here for two reasons. First of all, winning *loyalty* was achieved by allowing employees work-time *flexibility*. Furthermore, loyalty is an unexpected concern amid flexible capitalism (Martin 1994; Ong 1999; Sennett 1998;

Sennett 2006)—the dominant descriptor of our economic times and on a global scale. Accounts of flexible capitalism tend to emphasize qualities of ‘disembeddedness’ and mobility. At the level of people, the dominant theory is that capitalism is driving people to become ‘free-floaters’ so that as participants in the labor market, they can better respond to the whims of companies that must up and move and downsize and hire in response to fluctuating global markets.

Flexibility has become an all-pervasive metaphor (Martin 1994) and all of the outcomes are negative –cutting people off from their communities, from other people and even, from themselves—remaking them in the image and likeness of what the market needs (Dunn 2004; Sennett 1998). Accordingly, it is said that the market creates more responsible workers who can manage this kind of labour market, manage themselves and make themselves as attractive as possible, as mobile and as skilled (or as ‘employable’ (Garsten and Jacobsson 2004) as possible) to prospective employers. They are circumstances where loyalty seems to have little relevance (Sennett 2006)[14].

In the construction of a discourse of CR in Ireland, this sense of the speed and flux of contemporary life and economics was present, but the mission of corporate responsibility was to emphasize the value of creating employee loyalty. As Marian’s comment suggests, the back story is less about a movement ‘forced’ by flexible capitalism (not that that phrase is ever mentioned) than about the tradings up of opportunistic employees making the most of a ‘full’ employment market. Marian and Caroline had traded stories about attrition rates in the professional services sector, one company losing 300 graduates a year to rival companies. It becomes viable in that case for BFR to create an argument with its member companies for Workplace CR as the vehicle to employee loyalty or as it's more usually put, employee retention. The lee-way to juggle homes and lives with work was attractive in a potential employer.

There were rewards for this. The HR Director discussed earlier talked about getting a return on its efforts to engage with employees and to recognize their needs.

> We've found that [our company] in Ireland has one of the highest rates of female senior directors across all of the network at over 25%. We found that the number of women returners—managers who are coming back from maternity leave is almost 100%. That's unheard of in a business context. We found that the quality and the quantity of graduate applications has improved radically over the years. We've found that attrition levels have decreased. What does attrition levels mean in our business? It means that we're not spending external time in looking for people. It means we're not spending as much agency costs in recruiting other people. It means that we're maintaining a stable workforce that we are selling to our clients, to our customers who are seeing the same people year after year after year and ultimately as you saw earlier we were in a position to receive the wonderful awards from the great place to work institute and from the FT [Financial Times] earlier this year.

The 'win-wins' were ever present and furthermore, he added that statistics from the US indicated that 45 percent of firms that lay people off in one year will rehire them the following year. He wanted to indicate that now, in the downturn was the "the best time to win the hearts and minds of your people because it's your people ultimately that will determine where you will be positioned when we come out of this cycle."

While it goes without saying that employees are dependent on companies for jobs, he painted a convincing complementary picture of his company's dependence on their employees, and the value of embracing that dependence to the company—but within certain limits delineated by employees' personal responsibilities.

Changing the perspective of the degree and nature of dependency set in motion new functions, if not an expanse of new connections between society and the economy. If this was true for companies and employees, how did it look from the perspective of employees—as employees and as Irish people?

Choice and Control

According to one employee work life balance did not serve a patriotic or corporate duty to productivity and innovation. Rather, it was a matter of personal development that was foregrounded against discourses of Irish character. Granted, such discourses were readily available and according to several interlocutors, ripe for improvement. For instance, as we had planned the workplace event discussed earlier, I had brought up the idea of work life balance with Marian. She felt that Irish people can live work life balance values until there's a deadline. To myself, I wondered why deadlines have to be met in a rush like that, heroically. Others drew attention to some necessary components that they presented as *lacking* among Irish people – for example, difficulty managing time, recognizing or sticking to priorities or saying 'no'.

Similarly another interlocutor in the public service was derisive of Irish people's struggle to be responsible. He put it down to an inability to plan. That echoed the scathing views of an audience member at a conference on the social integration of immigrants to Ireland who said, metaphorically speaking, that Ireland was all about ambulances rather than safety.

Whether or not such pictures of Irish people were 'true' was not the issue. It was the extent to which these were recurring self-narratives that caught my ear and how voicing the lack of certain components seemed to signal a new perspective on the type of self that was necessary in Ireland, creating validation for a new self, and perhaps a new relation to one's own priorities. It seemed of little coincidence that that interrogation was taking place with economic prosperity and the processing of success in Ireland.

The experience of the Celtic Tiger was like nothing experienced before in Ireland – the ultimate triumph. It was, as one senior environmentalist put it recently (a little regretfully), “the definition of success in 20th century Ireland.” Asking informants about what Ireland was like during that time draws out analogies to parties on a national scale, or a characterization of Irish society as teenage and immature, dominated by the vulgar display of new money.

Remarks about ‘out of control excess’ draw attention to the experiences of the older generations, the pre-Celtic Tiger generations. It seems that they were well raised if they were seen, not heard and not spoiled, not indulged, pushed out to school even if sick. As one informant put it; “you had to be fit for hospital not to go to school.” Education was tantamount. It was the way to get a job and once you had that job you hung onto it. That generation was raised in towns called Greystones and their expectations about life were equally grey, set for set-backs, drudgery and poverty. One researcher highlights how this legacy provided Celtic Tiger consumers with a sense of always looking over their shoulder even as they enjoyed long-awaited wealth. Irish people seemed to spend the Celtic Tiger waiting for it to end – haunted as if, as he put it, “the bailiff is always at the door” – the bailiff being the landlord’s representative in colonial times.

The allusion to the legacy of colonialism is apropos. Geraldine Moane (2002) describes in psycho-analytic terms the kinds of problematic perspectives that colonial status tends to generate and perpetuate in national imaginations. Such perspectives include a weak sense of personal identity and a strong sense of inferiority visible in high alcoholism, a relative lack of civic interest and ambivalence to authority.

Actual economic circumstances would have provided no incentive to see things differently. In 1987, when the social partners first came together, Ireland was an economic “basket case” as one participant in social partnership called it. GDP per capita was 64 percent of the European Community average. Unemployment was running at 18.5 percent. Ireland had a national debt of over IR£25 billion which was 1.5 times GNP, consuming one third of annual tax revenue to service. As Ó Gráda (1977) describes it, after Independence in 1922, Ireland had a rocky road to establish either extensive or intensive growth in the country with a population of only 3 million, and with an ambivalent view of external trade, particularly with Great Britain, its nearest trading partner and old foe.

However, by agreeing to the initial partnership agreement in 1987, inflation fell, employment rose by 28 percent (compared to a 3 percent EU average) and between 1987 and 1999, the cumulative increase in real take home pay for a person on average manufacturing earnings was over 35 percent. Even the presentation of each social partnership document – from gritty black and white to colorful, graphically designed reports – expresses the change in Ireland’s fortunes.

Even though the economic triumph now seems past, it seems to have set ripples in motion at the level of personal disposition and in terms of coming to terms with that demure self-presentation that many Irish people expect of one another. A widely applied disdain about Irish people “getting ahead of themselves,” thinking that they are better than they are, contrasts interestingly now, with the frequent notes about remarkable self confidence among young people born during the last twenty years of prosperity. This break between the old and new also emerges as I’ve tried to engage informants to talk about responsibility in Ireland during the Celtic Tiger. More than one has preferred to talk a little indignantly, a little shocked, about how obsessed Irish people have become with rights.

Imagine these changes, these views on economy, historical legacy, life and work as the backdrop to my conversation with an interlocutor that I'll call Fiona, who seems to be living the break between old and new. She draws attention to how narratives of Irishness function in personal work-life histories, presenting some as riding the wave of wealth and others as not yet sure what to do with it. Either way, a cusp, a rubicon is conjured that marks a way point in a properly progressing work and personal life and that muddies the extent to which companies benefit at the expense of their employees.

Fiona is a former manager from an IT multinational. I focus on what she has to say not because she is representative of those I have interviewed but precisely because she isn't. In comparison to some of my other interlocutors she seems to have work life balance 'worked out'. To do that required particular skills that enabled her to put value on her own desires and on her relations to others. I use her as a foil to others who are still figuring out what is entailed in work life balance, who are still recognizing that caring for the self has more validity now in their workplaces. But we also see how even for this woman, these issues encapsulate a struggle with history and poverty thrown up by concepts of success and failure in Ireland.

Early in Fiona's career, she secured a job in a booming Germany. Hearing the news, her parents' first question was: "but what would the Germans want with an Irish person?" It echoes a comment in the Economist in 1988: "Self-confidence is not a quality that Ireland has much of" (Cairncross 1988, 4). The question was not personal but a commentary on Ireland. Fiona did well, later becoming a senior manager in a major IT multinational based in Ireland. I explored with her the concept of work life balance.

As one acquaintance, an admitted workaholic from the PR industry, said: “At least they see now that you have other responsibilities besides here”. Before, leaving at 5pm was truancy. For her, such policies recognize that her home life priorities and others have validity, or have power, at work. However, one Irish consultant advocate of CR dislikes the term work life balance. She believes the phrase ‘work life balance’ sets up a false dichotomy. For her, the two spaces are and should be intertwined - work feeding an important part of identity because so much time is spent at work. However, equally according to her, work should not be the only part of our lives. In other words, work and life should be intertwined while also quite distinct.

This practical muddle about what work life balance means rarely comes up explicitly but the confusion about its terms shows up. In the workplace that Fiona describes this messiness was readily apparent in staff surveys. Fiona cites a consistent pattern where 70% of employees wanted work life balance improved but just as many claimed that their manager was doing everything possible to help them have work life balance.

As the conversation evolves she describes what it takes to find work life balance in such circumstances. She first of all described her role as a manager as a buffer between demands on her staff’s time and personal lives. She says these CSR policies support you as a responsible manager and “help you to see the people.” So she distributed resources to her staff and conceded little extras such as time off. But rather than just protect them in the fast paced software world, she tried to also teach them how to find those degrees of engagement and distinction between work and life, how to have “a reasonable work life balance.” She used herself as a role model – a learning that was not adequately role modeled across the organization. She gave that feedback to [IT company] in a number of surveys directly, describing the stupidity of talking about work life balance when “then your manager says” that they were “in yesterday working on Sunday.”

Instead, she modeled her own character or the degrees of engagement between her work and life and how she worked that out. Key to that was to “make things work” for herself, doing “a lot of what suited” her, taking control and perhaps “coming home and doing a two-hour teleconference – some nights…not on exercise nights”. She argued “sometimes you just say, it’s busy and it suits these people in Asia that I talk to them at 10 o’clock tonight. 10 to 11 that’s grand, I’ll do it after Grey’s Anatomy,” she said laughing. And when people would say to her “God I’d hate your job you know” she had to ask “what’s the big deal? 10 to 11 wouldn’t kill me.” She decided that “it’s control that matters to work, to balance, not hours …as much… it’s again back to personal responsibility and I do think you have to turn off the, this idea of having to be seen to be online; this blackberry thing drives me nuts. I never got a blackberry. Choice.”

In the role she modeled the words ‘control’ and ‘choice’ recur as components of working out the degrees of engagement between work and life. She is clear about the connections she values, when and where. And this is advice that she passed on to her employees - directed into practical control of their time—beginning with making them recognize that their time was theirs and that they needed to make the choices to take control of it. She advised them that “it’s not that hard to push against it… Just don’t offer” or that “If you’re going to spend two hours on that presentation, put it in your calendar… that's back to …what matters to me you know… maybe they feel bullied into it or they don't feel confident enough…You have to say 'no' I cannot do that… yeah learning how to say 'no', learning nice ways to say it."

Other interlocutors talk about the struggle to work through these same issues, the work to accept that the entitlement is provided for and that they have the right to assert it. However, they struggled with the imperative they started their careers with - to just work hard. Now, recognizing that they should not work *that* hard, they struggled to work out how to balance the two. One informant located the issue firmly in the self, saying; "That's myself gets in the way." She goes on to talk about needing to think it all through more carefully, to work out what she values and to work out her time with others in her workplace, finally acknowledging that one key thing will be learning to say 'no'.

For others there was a sense that they were freshly through a process of working out what is important to them in their lives and making that work wherever they were. Reveling in a sense of exercising choice they talk about finding a new sense of confidence, confidence in what they can contribute inside and outside the office.

In these work situations there was a place for an entity that has a role to play in the company and outside it, straddling its inside and outside with certainty about its ethical values, its choices, its relationships. The policies may be there but all the stories, though I've really only outlined one, tack back and forth between what people can and should establish for themselves. But the first step seems to be self-knowledge – a recognition of "what matters to 'me'."

What provokes most speculation are the connections between this 'working out' at the level of the personal in the micro workplace and the level of the macro economic in

Ireland. The negotiations there between old drudgery and new confidence are echoed in different generalizations about Irish attitudes to work life balance. On the one hand, in contrast to Irish workers, Fiona says that “it’s in the psyche like of the French and the Germans that they will … maintain their tennis meetings … we don’t have that.” A similar view also turned up at a time-management workshop. The instrumentality of the calendar in helping people work out their work life balance was central but the time management guru also remarked on the Irish difficulty with saying ‘no’ to their managers. Yet, the data I have just discussed do suggest that in the workplace, through work life balance, just these kinds of things were beginning to be worked out. It was as if something had begun in fits and starts – sensible at the micro and the macro economic, too new to describe but marking a break with the past.

Fiona herself encapsulated this. Shortly after I wrote the bulk of this paper I told her that I was highlighting the Irish ability to say ‘no’ and her eyebrows shoot up – and I correct myself – the *inability* to say ‘no’ and she says that she was just about to correct me – that typically Irish people dissemble, say ‘maybe’ or “ah sure we’re grand”, put up with something rather than say ‘no’. Then she tells a story of a conference call she was on – an internal call but across different geographies. There was a crisis with one of the clients and the liaison with the client was on the line from Denmark. But at one point, he just said, “Well, I’m sorry. I have to go. I have tickets to the opera and they’re really hard to get and well, we’re nearly done here anyway.” Fiona talked about the sharp intake of breath at her side of the phone call, the “shock and awe”, that “the Irish would never do that”, how she would “love to be like that”. She laughed still, shaking her head, impressed with the idea of using opera tickets as an excuse. She had other examples.

For her, this attitude had a lot to do with poverty. She recalled again her parents saying to her when she moved to Germany; “why would the Germans want an Irish person?” – thinking Irish people couldn’t have much to offer the precise and sophisticated Germans. She said that’s low confidence and she compared it to today’s generation and how confident they are. In one step, she linked past poverty to low confidence. I challenged her on linking confidence to money. She conceded that it’s more about a sustained lack of success - that everything outside Ireland was successful and Ireland was so outward looking. She thinks about watching the State broadcaster’s documentary of reels from the 1950s onwards and how grey the scenes look. She thinks then of coverage of the arrival of Jackie Kennedy or Grace Kelly. “I know it was black and white television but she didn’t look grey,” she said. However, as bad as that misery was, she complained that with wealth now comes more “moaning”- people feel they have a choice. Moaning is one of those other Irish pet hates. It marks someone who is self obsessed, always making demands.

Overall, I am struck by the evocation of mixed views about choice and what matters to oneself belonging to this latter domain, by how this contrasts with a desire to be another ‘self’ who can say no to work because of opera tickets, and by how it contrasts even further with a construction or a working out of what matters to oneself in the workplace – and with the advocacy of this position with staff under the CR policies of work life balance. As this character confidently straddles the inside and the outside of the workplace, she also occupies a ‘caughtness’ between the ethical implications of past and future, failure and success in Ireland. The two positions are not necessarily complementary.

Nonetheless, there is a distinct sense overall of an impelled movement to explicitly work out what Ireland's new character might comprise. In August 2008, in the run up to a rare 'state of the nation' speech by the Irish Prime Minister or Taoiseach, an Irish Times journalist reminded us that following his election as Taoiseach, Brian Cowen told the Irish Parliament: "The character of the generations that will build this century is still being formed. It is these generations that will decide the shape of the future." The writer reminded us of the changes in authority figures in Ireland, and importantly changes in the level of income and expectations and she added: "Our values are not in decline, but in a process of clarification."

NOTES

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1 CORI, the Conference of Religious of Ireland, is a membership organization formed in 1983 of 138 religious congregations, that represents in excess of 12,000 men and women religious in 1,400 communities across Ireland, north and south. CORI emerged in the deteriorating social and economic conditions of the 1980s, quickly making income poverty its chief target. As the new governance structure of Partnership took shape, it became clear that that was where the organisation most needed to direct its concerns and along with representatives of the unemployed and local communities and volunteers they became one of the "dynamos" of the Community and Voluntary Pillar of the Social Partnership arrangements (Larragy 2006). See also Note 2.

2 Social Partnership, (ESP) was an important national governance structure that allegedly rescued Ireland from the jaws of IMF intervention in the late 80s (Mac Sharry, White, and O'Malley 2000, 45). Under that threat several representative groups who had been consultees of the NESC—the National Economic and Social Council, the State-led social and economic think-tank that has advised government on social and economic policy since 1973—came together in a bid to turn the economy around. In 1986, with the urging of its union, employer, agricultural and government consultees, NESC created the basis for agreement between those same members, with government and opposition party backing, on a three-year *Programme for National Recovery* (Department of An Taoiseach 1987). A significant dimension of this effort was "the creation of a fiscal, exchange rate and monetary climate conducive to economic growth" (5), centered on debt stabilization through spending cuts and wage agreements. Seven subsequent agreements documented how the country should continue the recovery and eventually, how it should ensure everyone benefited from the growing wealth of the so-called Irish 'Celtic Tiger' economy. The complexities of how groups entered partnership are documented by Larragy (2006)].

3 See http://www.heritage.org/index/TopTen.aspx

4 The concerns with work at a national level were an important part of concerns with fostering what have been called "supply-side" improvements to the Irish labour profile—in other words training provisions invested in the worker as opposed to the creation of jobs. According to Tansey in Ireland "demand-side measures—direct job creation and employment subsidies—were strongly favoured over supply-side initiatives—enhanced training provision—in the decade after 1983" (1998, 135). As the economy

improved and employment grew, there were increasing drives towards workplace innovation and the National Centre for Partnership and Performance was established as one strand of assisting that.

5 This line of thinking was supported by research conducted by a specially convened Workplace Forum in 2004 whose results indicated that Ireland was rapidly transitioning towards a knowledge society because "The growth rate of employment in knowledge intensive services in Ireland far outstripped the EU average in the period 1997-2002 [and] Ireland has the largest share of trade in R&D-intensive industries among OECD countries" (Forum on the Workplace of the Future 2005, ix). The research further predicted that "by 2015 one in four [Irish] people [would] be employed in knowledge-intensive professions". Life-long learning would need to be improved (x).

6 Embracing the potential of the knowledge economy pointed "to the need for a radically new workplace 'mindset. Innovative approaches must be found to enable Ireland's workplaces to combine flexibility and productivity with a high-quality working environment for all. This in turn requires employers, employees, trade unions and other stakeholders to collaborate in bringing about sustainable change" (Forum on the Workplace of the Future 2005, 23). Their charge would be coordinated at a national level using the National Workplace Strategy just quoted. But more specifically, to achieve these goals the document outlined 42 measures "with five strategic strands. The strands are [1] commitment to workplace innovation, [2] capacity for change, [3] developing future skills, [4] access to opportunities and [5] quality of working life"(23).

In assessing the fifth strand, the quality of working life, the report first noted that:

> The Forum's survey of employees found significant levels of work pressure, with over half of all employees indicating that they experience some measure of work pressure and a significant minority reporting that they find work to be stressful. Difficulty in balancing work with family life was found to be a key contributor to employee stress. Factors which were found to reduce stress and increase employee satisfaction include giving employees more control over their day-to-day working lives, consultation and sharing information. Flexible working arrangements and family-friendly practices were also found to have a positive impact on employees' experience of work (65).

Then, of the three recommendations made to improve 'Quality of Working Life" it notes: "Work/life balance policies should continue to be promoted, consistent with business needs, in a manner that ensures that the careers of individuals who take up flexible arrangements are not adversely affected" (92).

The Forum on the Workplace of the Future that had authored this national workplace strategy was sponsored by the National Centre for Partnership and Performance (NCPP), itself established under the 1997-2000 Partnership Agreement 'Partnership 2000'. The NCPP published many reports in parallel to the work of the Forum and its High Level Implementation Group but one describing what they called High Performance Work Systems (HPWS) (Flood et al, 2008) put in financial terms the value of flexible working arrangements within a suite of complementary tactics.

"The findings demonstrate the powerful and synergistic effect of a multi-dimensional model of HPWS, where the net impact of combining strategic human resource management (HRM) with employee involvement and participation systems, equality and diversity systems and flexible working systems, significantly exceeds the impact of any of these systems in isolation. In economic terms, the median-sized company in this sample (270 employees) employing the multi-dimensional model of HPWS would have performance advantages including almost €12,000,000 (or €44,399 per employee) in labour productivity, and €556,200 (or €2,061 per employee) in workforce innovation" (National Centre for Partnership & Performance and The Equality Authority 2008, 6).

Finally it must be acknowledged that there seems to be an assumption underlying this work that happier workers are productive workers. Zhou and George (2001) suggest that is not necessarily true. Their research in fact shows a link between dissatisfaction and productivity—albeit under very specific circumstances where employees are dissatisfied, but nonetheless committed to staying in the company and feel they have contextual support to come up with new and better ways of doing things. This amalgam can *help* current conditions and organizational effectiveness.

7 This is in contrast to the reasons for the dissolution of unions that Strath & Gamet (2000) note in other European countries which was mass *un*employment (15-16, emphasis added).

8 According to labor historian Michael Allvin (2004) the coming of industrial society represented "a new set of rules regulating the relationship between life and its material production" (25). The immediate

task was to control the body and worker's attitudes – keeping people in one place for the duration of the work day and even better, having them return for more. The machines and factories disciplined bodies but as the industrial revolution aged, the reaction against the conditions of labour and the concerns about exploitation also grew—making labor into the concept that we know better today as one encompassing the reaction against work conditions.

9 See Dangerfield 1997, 254-266

10 Newfield 1998. Human relations is a predominantly American and Japanese phenomenon beginning in the 1980s that denounced hierarchical structure, vaunted team-work and made the company synonymous with its employees. See also (Baba 1988; Baba 2009; Roethlisberger 1939).

11 This is not a legitimacy accorded by the company. It is accommodated by the company and in Ireland the employment rights (career progression etc) of part-time workers are protected under the Protection of Employees (Part-time Work) Act 2001.

12 One professional services company executive noted as they asked about going too far that it's true that sometimes, when professional services have deadlines, working late is often necessary but in that case, work life balance is about a clued-in manager with the discretionary power to give time-in-lieu. It's a matter of trade-offs and if done well, it's worked out with the least fuss on the basis of trust between manager and employee.

13 Companies depended on their relationships with other businesses, and would not relish the risk of damaging those relationships and hence their reputations. (cf. Carroll and Buchholtz 2002; De Bakker, Groenewegen, and Den Hond 2005; Sachs et al. 2006).

14 One of the key features of the labor market in a period of flexibility is "employability". This idea emphasises how the individual should pursue continuous learning but at a deeper level it signals "a transition from relatively stable patterns of work to more uncertain structural arrangements, with new demands placed on the individual" (Garsten and Jacobsson 2004, 1). The links between flexibility and employability are described in more detail by by Strath (2000) in terms that align employability (and 'flexibility') with the dissolution of the social responsibility of the state. Such views are relevant though not all employees in Ireland were captured by it. At the time of the Celtic Tiger, as well as short term contractors, and some who were choosing to move jobs for better conditions, the labour market also comprised employees who had no requirement to be 'fit' to move jobs. It was not necessarily a matter of needing to improve one's 'employability' in order to find a job. As such, the extent to which discourses of employability could be said to have replaced those of 'full employment' in Ireland at the time of research was not clear though I suspect that with the contracted labor market of the early 2010's, training and better employment credentials are increasingly important.

Chapter 3 - Community

In this chapter I want to draw attention to the concept of ‘strategy’ or the adjective ‘strategic’ and how it encapsulates the operation of confrontation and fixing as well as reflection as it is being appropriated by corporate responsibility advocates and deployed to redescribe the relationship between companies and their local communities.

It is an unusual analysis of the word ‘strategic’ compared to what might be the approach of business texts for example. This is a story about the power of the word ‘strategy’ and the effort to make that power understood and applicable in the development of ‘strategic corporate community involvement.’

Where the word ‘community’ in a business context was often mistaken for a synonym for philanthropic donations, or indeed for all corporate responsibilities, this chapter discusses the drive to isolate ‘community’ as one among several stakeholders a company should be responsible to (among employees, suppliers, customers and environmental advocates) while also realigning or marrying ‘community’ with ‘strategy’ with the objective of aligning business and community interests and day-to-day business operations. The reason for this latter effort was a concern among corporate responsibility (CR) advocates that philanthropic donations can be terminated easily and have little social or business impact[1] whereas they argued that a strategic alignment between business and community has deeper benefits for the business and for the community partners—in other words deeper benefits for the sustainability of both.

Hence this chapter is a discussion of the social preparation required for strategy and what gets negotiated once the word is invoked between two parties (here, business and community organizations) who may not necessarily have seen the relations between them as strategic nor any value in the concept for their own activities.

It is important to set a context for the confrontation and fixing between the assemblage that is called ‘community’ and business and to show that community has a long and cherished history in Ireland, a trajectory of its own. This history is part of the reason why an association with community might be framed as desirable for companies and yet, why such an association might be difficult to argue for.

Historically, the word ‘community’ has always signaled a highly politicized space in Ireland, a moral or at least ethical field in the realm of governance official and otherwise. During the past two decades, at the height of the Celtic Tiger economic boom with its mass immigration and greater consumer spending, the word ‘community’ was at the center of intense activity ultimately concerned with refocusing on the goals of social inclusion and community development. The plethora of reports, debates and books published in the 2000s[2] focused on the complementary triad of generating social capital, boosting volunteerism and fostering active citizens who, by embracing an ethos of civic republicanism, could reclaim a true democracy built through the sense of community that people felt was at risk of being lost.

The sense of loss relates to the long-cherished ethos that ‘community’ signifies in Ireland. Irish people feel that community or ‘working from the bottom up’ is something that Irish people are already good at. The chronology of volunteering—one of the enablers of community according to present-day formulas—cited in one report (National Committee on Volunteering 2002) describes a long history in this space. The report identified the care and philanthropy of Irish churches and nobility from medieval times up to the 19th century. Then, the Gaelic revival and the creation of several volunteer based organisations (such as the Gaelic Athletic Association) at the end of the 19th century preceded references to 20th century cooperation in rural communities—with their own coinage in Irish of *meitheal* (group of cooperative men and women) and *comhair* (reciprocity)—as well as the cooperative movement in agriculture.

In the 1930s, one of the architects of what eventually became the Irish Republic (1937) as well as eventual Taoiseach [Prime Minister] and President of the Republic, Eamon de Valera had sponsored a team of anthropologists from Harvard (Arensberg and Kimball 2001) to study life in Ireland. Their positive emphasis on bonds and cooperation between rural smallholders for the perpetuation of family was central to their study. The effort described networks of cooperation—that Arensberg and Kimball explicitly referred to as ‘community’—forcing individualism into the background and explaining marriage and even emigration patterns.

But it wasn’t until the 1960s that the explicit connection between such bonds and the word ‘community’ seems to have occupied popular thought in rural and increasingly, in urban settings. Speaking to an elderly Irish lady the word ‘community’ was about ‘neighbors’—how one looked out for one another—but she was quite clear that the phenomenon wasn’t called ‘community’ until the 1950s or 60s perhaps. Her early association was with a TV show that pitted the singing and dancing talent of one local area against another. It was called ‘Tops of the Community’ and was sponsored by a cigarette company.

Why the 1960s? I can speculate that it had something to do with the faltering, still predominantly pastoral economy leaching migrants to Irish cities and abroad that peaked in the late 1950s. Of the 1960s, the National Committee on Volunteering (2002) notes,

> The 1960s saw the beginnings of a community development movement, grounded in a very specific social analysis, primarily in the growing urban areas. By the 1990s the community development movement, strongly supported by State and European Commission funding programmes, and strengthened by the political edge of its grounding in social analysis, had spread to rural areas and achieved an increasing role in Partnership Programme Development… The latter part of the 20th century saw a huge change in the shape of volunteering in Ireland. Increasing urbanisation and associated social problems saw the rise of many community groups coalescing around issues such as unemployment and drug abuse and, in many cases, based on 'pure' voluntary activity, and delivering social services. At the same time, other voluntary organisations, again based on mainly voluntary effort, sprang up around the rights of women, people with disabilities, lesbians and gay men, and Travellers. Many of these organisations are self-help or mutual support organisations… Voluntary action in Ireland, therefore, continues to grow and diversify according to the identification of needs and shifts in social norms (10).

Writing about the UK, Rose's (1999) chronology of community also picks out the 60s for how they marked a professionalization of institutions and services for citizens that took the brand 'Community'.

Even though many former Irish rural dwellers remember a harder edge to the romanticized notion of community and even though Arensberg and Kimball's study has been highly criticized[3], the idea of community as a place of bonds maintains in Ireland. In the popular ideal the layers of the concept seem blended so that the earthy anthropological from the 1930s resonates with urban interest groups and thus assembled, however fictive, 'community' is a favored concept of ordinary people, churches and lawmakers.

In each scenario, dated and current, community represents particular opportunities and challenges for business. Businesses – especially the small ones of 50 or less employees that represent 80 percent of Ireland's companies (Central Statistics Office 2008)—have always cultivated local relationships. In Arensberg and Kimball's 1930s Ireland the connections of community penetrated town boundaries, illustrating the commercial relationship between the farmer and the shopkeeper that accommodated farming cash-flows as well as the transfer of rural young people—who had no future on the land—into commercial apprenticeships.

At the sharper end of such relations was the 'gombeen' man, 'gombeen' being an anglicization of the Irish 'gaimbín' meaning 'interest'. The character is a hated figure. Arensberg and Kimball refer to them as 'evil's of the past' (Arensberg and Kimball 2001, 407), but evils nonetheless.

> The term was originally coined to describe the activities of rural moneylenders in pre-Famine Ireland. After the Famine the term became transposed to shopkeepers either practicing usury as a sideline, or integrating orthodox commercial and usurious relations of exploitation. Such shopkeepers were a common phenomenon everywhere in the early capitalist world, but in certain areas of Ireland, particularly the western seaboard, the 'gombeenman' was not simply one entrepreneur among many, but the effectual ruler of large tracts of country and hundreds of 'subjects'. This status was frequently reflected in their acquisition of the title 'king' or 'lord' (Gibbon and Higgins 1974, 31-32).

Even where the relationship between shopkeeper and his or her contacts was more benign, it was a 'thin' affair, with brief contact and only in relation to money. Farmer—the 'keeper' of community in Arensberg and Kimball's study—and shopkeeper were always strangers to one another. Even the cooperative movement which saw farmer ownership of processing and marketing their goods as an important path to nationalistic revival, also voiced distrust about shopkeeper intentions (AE 1930, 21-22).

According to Arensberg and Kimball much as a familiar shop keeper represented a friend to the farmer in the strange place of the local town, "even these relationships… are not free of potential tension. The farmer's position is usually a dependent one, and his manners, speech, and dress are different from those of the shopkeeper. He believes the shopkeeper to be a very intelligent fellow because he does not have to work hard, he makes a great deal of money, and he is able to travel about and meet people" (406).

To the shopkeeper of the 1930s, the stereotype of the countryman is “an enigma. He may refer to him as a tricky fellow who would cheat you if he had the chance, and in the next breath he tells you that it is practically impossible to understand him. In his opinion, farmers are very deep, and you never know what is going on in their heads. Often he will recount with laughing indulgence talks of rural buffoonery. Customs surrounding marriage, birth, or death are considered either amusing or barbarous, and certainly there is little sympathetic understanding of the purposes they serve” (407).

This divide is no longer characteristic (if it ever was) though vestiges of it linger. With the 1960s, community has asserted itself increasingly to be more than a rural thing but it is still somewhat exclusive of business. For the business owner now, community is all around—rural, urban, business and non-business neighbors alike. The most identifiable representatives of this new amorphous cloud are those who claim to represent something other than business, some kind of interest that business doesn’t, but could, address itself to. It seems that business’s default stance to such entities has been to sponsor them as a way of demonstrating their place “in the community”.

CR advocates have come to need that kind of relationship to be different for many reasons. During my research a wide range of forces were coming to mean community and corporations should confront one another in a more all-encompassing way. The promotion of social capital, volunteering and active citizenship by the apparatus of the state in Ireland was conducive to a message about greater corporate community involvement especially through volunteering and a role for business in this was explicitly mentioned in various reports under the heading of CSR.

But the need for companies to consider how they did their business vis a vis local communities also had origin stories in events around the globe that created a context that no business could escape. The relationship was being formalized to ensure that it was always seen as a long-term investment no matter how big or how independent of one local community a business became.

It wasn't always like that. According to one corporate responsibility executive that I call Frankie, CSR had started 30 or 40 years ago. The big companies that had impacts on the environment suddenly realized that they couldn't "just keep digging stuff out of the earth [...] and not worry about it." They didn't do it for optimistic reasons but because of the green movement and the fear of being "taken to task" or the risk of "negative publicity." So they decided they'd "better do something about it and having looked at the environment [...] it was [...] a short hop" to the communities who were affected by their environmental impacts - and so, "community programmes developed."

But because of what Frankie calls the 'me-too' effect—the effect of competitors watching and imitating one another (cf. DiMaggio and Powell 1983 for a detailed discussion of the mimetic processes between organizations. See also Chapter 4)—other companies simply adopted CSR programs encompassing environmental and community initiatives. However they did so only in a reactive way where they hadn't thought about the logic of the effort to the extent that, as Frankie said "sometimes they don't even understand themselves why they're doing it." CSR became widely associated with reacting and appeasing communities with handouts or so called "check-book charity" without a clear business reason for the gifts. That became known as Corporate Social Responsibility or CSR. Hence in the formalization, the whole point of investing in the future or preventing the causes of stakeholder concerns, was lost and now needed to be reclaimed. The worry from the point of view of CSR advocates was that just giving money to the local community would not change company operations and it would also look like a cost for the business.

In defense of what CSR *could* mean, Frankie did point out that the ambition was for it to rid itself of its original narrow connotations of environmental remediation and community ‘giving’ and especially the copycat giving. This had driven the dropping of the word ‘social’ to change the concept from CSR or corporate *social* responsibility into ‘corporate responsibility’. The ambition was for corporate responsibility to become *the* philosophy guiding management decisions towards the best interests of *all* stakeholders, including shareholders and local communities.

For Frankie, this progression necessitated a subtle but important change in mindset from seeing community and environmental representatives as people who needed to be appeased to people (and not the *only* people) with a ‘say’ in the business. By reframing it as a management philosophy addressing stakeholders (i.e. people with a say in the business) the theory was that the business was more likely to change the way it operated in response to or even better, in anticipation of, their needs. From seeing community and environmental representatives that way, the next logical step would be to see that way too, employees, suppliers and customers. By paying attention to those with a say in the business, the business would meet their needs and itself have a better chance of continuity. Everyone is in this together, so the story goes.

Similarly, another interlocutor that I call Sam, from an representative organization that had formed a discussion group on these issues, explained the rationale for CR or for ‘sustainability’ as she called it but she identified a particular reason why Irish business should care or should start to think about the local community and specifically, why they should care about getting beyond check-book charity with the local community. She too started with the origin of CR in environmental concerns. She argued that a proper relationship with the environment is important for companies, but identified how, in trying to make it relevant to Ireland, companies' relationships *with people* were way more important. She quoted a business man who understood:

> [T]hat you must restore back the environment to the way you found it as best possible obviously when you're extracting stuff from it but he also understands that you need to have sustainable viable, communities of people because they're your workforce and you also need to maintain the good will, license to operate thing so you also need to be nice guys, you can't afford to be just coming through and pillaging where you are…

In Ireland she suggested that physical environmental issues were not as material – so it pushed the sustainability agenda in a particular direction towards a reframing of community not as recipients of charity but as an important localized stakeholder:

> If you think about what big business is in Ireland like banks and things it's much less clear how they will be affected by [physical environmental issues]. Okay you see them now sending you your online statement rather than paper and you can talk about ethical loans and this kind of thing but it's not as clear what [sustainability] should be and I suppose in Ireland we've decided it should have a social dimension because of the kind of country we are which is very much a knowledge economy. We don't have natural resources. There aren't loads of people here mining and drilling so the social stuff has to be one of the key sustainability issues for business in Ireland because that's what brings business here. Businesses come here to invest because they see the workforce and they see the people.

I asked: "By social what do you mean?" She responded: "Well, that's what I'm trying to get this group to do is to think outside the box. I mean obviously they talk about workforce – so things like sustaining the workforce and looking at levels of education and that kind of thing but it also has things like integration and emigration and that sort of stuff, getting that right… for instance we're interested in this work that Richard Florida has been doing."

Florida's (2004) argument, in contrast to Friedman's description of a flat world (2006), is that creative cities are like spikes that attract industry and Sam said that this is the kind of place that Dublin wants to be[4]. Ireland doesn't want to be concerned about keeping labor costs low but does want to be concerned with a whole other reason to attract investment. "You want to invest because of the creativity and the vibrancy and everything else." Florida has identified three things that make these places stand out as attractive creative centers, good places to live and work. One is talent in a very broad sense—the education of people. The other one is technology, referring to infrastructure and IT and his third one is tolerance. It's about respect and rights for diverse populations. He cites San Francisco as such a place and pinpoints its gay population as a key contributor for instance.

Sam raised the interesting question, thinking of the future, as to where business people are going to come from and the desire for them to grow up in more progressive settings. She was trying to get her group to think away from the good versus evil dichotomy they feel surrounds business and to get them to see themselves as thinkers rather than anything else. Her organization's impulse was to eventually get NGOs into these discussions too – to reframe them from 'head bangers' or 'wasters' and to find a middle ground away from the social partnership[5] talks which she saw as a wage agreement giving rise to negotiation on the 'lowest common denominator' on social issues. With business it seemed, more could be achieved.

But putting a limit on how far this thinking should go, her further rationale was that "it's not that business should be responsible for society… but business should be doing business in a way that's right for business". She was keen to get away from the idea also prevalent among companies that "you're making an awful lot of money so you should be thinking about giving something back" to the community. The idea of giving something back—especially without a clear reason for doing so—suggested that companies were guilty of something, of taking without due return and this was their way of making up for it. One interlocutor noted how CSR was the purview of: "the older guys who've had the mild stroke and who suddenly feel they need to give something back" by reforming their lives and the world. From Sam's point of view it was not that sustainability is "the right thing to do."

Instead, Sam wanted her group to be hard-edged, talking about competitiveness and that *this* "should impact on us acting responsibly". She clarified that it's about getting companies to take responsibility for themselves rather than to follow the dictates of responsibility externally. In other words, companies should aim to share the impetus for doing the right thing between social ends (e.g. competitive companies generating long-term employment) and the internal goal—hence denying that very sociality where 'doing the right thing' issues from the business's survival in an unforgiving environment. "Otherwise," she claimed "they'll revert to 'the business of business is business'"—Milton Friedman's (2002, 6) famous dictate on CR that was blind to any goals, drivers or dependencies for the business other than making profit for shareholders. While Friedman can accommodate CSR *if* it contributes to the bottom line, for Sam it seemed that responsible or sustainable practices were a *necessary* output of a truly competitive organization though there was a great deal of flexibility as to what those practices would actually look like—an appealing prospect for companies who relish 'strategic flexibility,' (Hitt, Keats, and DeMarie 1998) where they mold their responses around core competencies.

Consistent with what Sam's colleagues had said in speeches, CSR as a whole, under the predominant banners of community-giving and environment, was focused too much on the *tension* between business and society and this "had led some Irish companies to become involved in a succession of non-integrated CSR-related activities that are *not connected to business strategy"* (emphasis added). In other words, these activities were sidelines to the real business that the company was focused on. Such efforts could be terminated without affecting the business—and while such sidelines were laudable, they argued that "they may have limited social impact and do little to enhance a company's competitiveness." In other words to lend itself to company survivability the company philosophy had to be converted into practices—connected to everything the business does everyday, its community relationships included.

So 'community' had become a non-preferred word in CR circles. Now among CR advocates in Ireland, an interest in 'community' alone signaled the uninitiated or the poorly motivated companies—the ones that were not progressing, not seeing CR as about 'how' you make money as opposed to what you do with it afterwards (McElhaney 2007), not integrating it into their business processes, not making it strategic.

The business leaders' invocation of 'strategy' above suggests there is 'muscle' behind it, as if when something is strategic, one knows that it is taken seriously by a business, sited at the heart of what company executives think constantly about—managing or *doing* business.

BFR's Role – Beyond Community

The goal had become changing 'community' from a synonym for philanthropy and worse, a philanthropy without motivation, and for CSR to be something more dynamic and far-reaching, one part of an all-encompassing philosophy or engagement with a range of stakeholders, not just the community. Even then, BFR itself struggled with how to conceptualize community because the initial meaning of giving after business is done was also BFR's first engagement with the issue by virtue of its origins and what was topical at the time.

BFR began as another organization established in the 1990s as part of employer representative groups' commitments to a social partnership agreement (Department of An Taoiseach 1991) with government and trade unions. To provide access to jobs, the concern of all parties, enterprise development in local communities was central. Hence, Investing Enterprises as I call it, was set up to collect donations and redistribute them to "establish and/or support initiatives in Ireland or any community thereof directed towards generation of enterprise for the benefit and welfare of unemployed people."

However that organization was replaced in 2000 by BFR and while the pattern of channeling donations and of patronage lingered that too was beginning to seem outmoded. There was more to business than money. Barbara the new chief executive started on January 2nd 2000 and quickly, with the help of a heavy-hitting business-led board, gathered CEOs to hear her pitch for a network of companies interested in corporate responsibility. Several major companies bought in, providing capital donations towards administering the network.

> E: and what was the, what did they think they were buying into do you know, like was it some kind of advice or

> B: it was going to be a vehicle, a vehicle for companies to get involved in their communities and to know what the best practice was around other issues but … the thing that I thought was missing was programmes. It had a very community focus to it and I thought that if you looked at the major issues in the world they were around workplace and they're around marketplace and that was the way it was back 10 years ago or 15 years ago… and now you see that community is actually the smaller part... So for me it was a no brainer. I didn't want to work on just on community aspects because I thought that's a nice to have… I thought that they should begin to look at how do you make changes, social changes with your community impact instead of just the ad hoc …

In other words, community needed to take its place alongside other stakeholders and it needed to produce more than ad hoc donations. When Angela was hired early in BFR's existence, her brief was to look at how the organization could get companies involved in community but possibly in other areas as well. So she began to do research. Some of the models available – one in Northern Ireland which was part of another in the UK – provided lots of good ideas though in their application she felt they were very focused on community or on the environment.

> Our brief was to work with the leading lights, the leading companies, within the Republic to get those clear on what CSR constituted and what they were doing in the area beyond community. So I think I started to write a document – a step by step guide to integrating corporate responsibility indicating what was the business case… and then how a company might go about doing something in terms of measuring their impact in the first place and communicating it.

To go beyond community as it had been—something that at the time of research Frankie and Sam and indeed BFR were still not satisfied had been achieved – would require changing what community signified. As well as not allowing it to be a synonym for philanthropy or for CSR in total or for what one does with the money one makes, it would mean integrating community-as-stakeholder into the business activities alongside all the business activities *and other* stakeholder engagements to do with environment, customers, suppliers and employees. To integrate thinking about community into the practices of the business in these ways would require making community 'strategic.'

As a first step Angela drew on two documents from the year 2000 – one devised by CSR Europe (a European network for organisations such as BFR) that was a CR measurement tool for small and medium enterprises and another that had emerged from Business in the Community (the UK-based CR advocacy) entitled ‘*Winning with Integrity*’. Both documents use terminology such as: Workforce, Environment, Marketplace, Community as placeholders for all the stakeholders that a business should consider. However, the hold on thinking that the old meaning of the word community had is evident in Angela’s first attempt to use those terms. Instead of positing the competitive advantage of a positive impact on *society* as the ultimate aim of attending to these four stakeholder groupings as it is in later documents, ‘community involvement’ was the source and the ultimate rationale, the ultimate stakeholder to which good relations with the workplace, marketplace and environment would flow.

> Being socially responsible and saying so is a competitive edge. Strategically implementing CSR practice and behaviour strengthens commercial position and brings about tangible economic success… *A good community involvement track record will help influence decision-makers and experience of working in the community* prepares the company for managing the demands of a diverse workforce and a changing marketplace (my emphasis).

The document did focus on changing operations, but rationalized this by the localized goal of a better community. As Angela herself explained more recently, when she started she had to research and try and make sense of all that was out there. “Induction was three days... which was all about community—and a bit on environment—and then off to Brussels for the first European conference on the subject. So while it’s true to say that the argument was made in favour of community,.. CSR, as it was termed, was defined in terms of community impact, certainly from the perspective of companies that were keen to come on board. So that's why it took a while to fully articulate the view." In other words, as she said, her original document "was of its day" and only two years after it had been published, a new version was issued. That articulated the task and the benefits of attending to *all* stakeholders in terms of a business of the world that happens to be somewhere right now and that can only survive by engaging with all stakeholders.

Angela pointed out that the UK-sourced 'Winning With Integrity' document turned out to be influential. Its framework for assessing all the areas of CR is perfectly consistent still with the changes in thinking appropriate also for Ireland. In that, the place of 'Community' was relativized so that it was one among other stakeholders and directions were provided to make it strategic. To make Community Involvement strategic, three stages of progression should start with a review of existing activity, of business objectives and community needs and of the resources required. Secondly, a strategy should be drawn up with objectives and targets, how resources would be allocated and how community partners would be engaged with. Training supports are provided for staff while achievements were monitored.

Continuous improvement, partaking of that ubiquitous late liberal idea epitomized in 'enterprise culture' (cf. Rose 1996; 1999) and achieving external validation would be parts of the final stage where all the steps were run together such that the engagement with the community becomes systemic within the company and between the company and community groups. It is perfectly compatible with standard business school texts on the formulation and implementation phases of strategic planning (cf. Bryson 1988; Steiner 1979). Furthermore, this approach should spread between companies as business leaders communicated their efforts. (This is a tricky expectation seeing as the company may well have engaged in the process for competitive advantage. Sharing such information seems a give-away but the extent to which *all* information on a project would be shared is not clear. I discuss how companies navigate this tension between competition and expectations to collaborate in Chapter 4.) In this system where financial donations were the measure of community success for a company starting out, as it progresses impact is reframed as staff time and skills and how well a system is being put in place until ultimately the question is how well the systems and skills are having a local impact.

Ever-honing its advocacy, since the early 2000s, BFR has developed two editions of a guide for how communities and business can work together– one in 2005 and the other in 2010. Unlike the 2005 introduction, the 2010 edition immediately mentions how communities and business can work together and mutually benefit in terms of social impact from partnership with one another. Spelling out those benefits has changed little between the two guides from the point of view of the community groups. However for business, from seven points describing the benefits in 2005, it has jumped to 13 points[6], now emphasizing company CR strategy, and making a stronger connection between a healthy community and a healthy business and how the two bring each other about:

2005	2010
Company	**Company**
1.More positive company image	1. Promotes a positive company image/reputation
	2. Fits with company strategy/corporate responsibility policy
2.Greater brand loyalty by customers	3. Creates greater brand loyalty by customers
3.Improved links with local community	4. Improves links with local community
4.Increased company pride and loyalty by staff	5. Increases company pride and loyalty by staff
	6. Creates business development potential
	7. Attracts talent – new recruits want to join
	8. Helps maintain a healthy community which is essential to business
Employees	**Employees**
1. Improved staff morale, motivation and team spirit	1. Improves staff morale, motivation and team spirit
2. New skill development opportunities for staff	2. Develops new skill opportunities for staff i.e. project management, presentation skills
3. Build teamwork	3. Builds better teamwork i.e. the chance to meet and work with people from other departments
	4. Increases knowledge of the values and ethos of the community and voluntary sector
	5. Improves the community services employees and their families use

By 2010 the challenge on paper is for the company to engage only with the intention of extending the benefits beyond its immediate commercial needs to longer loops that pass through the community.

There are three things to note about these documents that expose several dimensions to the concept of strategy as it was being applied to corporate-community involvement. Firstly, they are engagement documents – in other words, they are templates for bringing into contact on a number of different levels two entities that have only had very particular and limited kinds of contact up to now. In a fresh context and with business people who don't know how business should be done now vis a vis communities, it is a confrontation of sorts.

Secondly, the projected operation of these programs was that thinking about community would be *tied* to what the business does—to employee skills, to gifts in kind. It was a question of tying 'right-by-the-community' to existing company processes. Arguably this is a key component in the connotation of 'muscle' that strategy has in business and why it would be an attractive appropriation by BFR in order to make community improvement happen. By making something strategic, by tying something to other processes already designated as essential or already being done by companies, the faith seemed to be that one could be sure this new thing would also get done by them.

Thirdly by tying something else to what the business does, the business was effectively putting a discipline on itself—thus it was a self-reflection in a very thorough sense—i.e. one that would also *change* 'self' as much as having a positive impact on others. Objectives and targets in this case, despite their militaristic sound, were not for conquest of the community group. For a company that sees the mutual benefits of working together, targets and objectives led to the corralling of the business itself to partner with community.

Thus, in this realm, strategy not only brought about a confrontation and a simultaneous 'fixing' together, but it also operated at the level of the reflexive, managing the confrontation (with self and with others) and the fixing towards a particular end. As Gordon (Foucault 1980) put it "[w]hat is meant by a strategy of power is the interplay between one or more programmes/technologies and an operational evaluation in terms of strategy: a logically hybrid (and sometimes elusive) function which integrates the production of effects with the utilisation of those effects" (252). The word strategy here captures the interplay, the production of a confrontation/fixing on business itself and between business and community that emerged with and was guided by an abstracted but shared vision for the use of that confrontation/fixing—i.e. in mutual sustainability. Ultimately strategy would also mean that emerging relations were reflected upon giving rise to new confrontations/fixings. Thus strategy was to do three things simultaneously.

The novelty of thinking this way about strategy emerges when one considers how the concept of strategy is typically used. For the most part, such references (cf. Bourdieu 1977; Foucault 1980; Luhmann 1996) have connotations of deftness, movement, unpredictability or mutability derived for example from the permutations available in a range of possible social moves. Here, strategy is the skill of being in a situation and selecting moves to improve one's position vis a vis another. It is most definitely a skill of confrontation and change. Strategy as it is commonly conceived, might be the essential skill of competitors, deftly departing a transaction when the conditions no longer suit.

However, if we are to follow the insight on strategy offered by this data then change does not come so freely (as such casting doubt on the existence of perfect market competition itself – see also Chapter 4). This data suggests that the change of strategy must also contend with new attachments as well as old. Hence more emphasis should be given to the 'fixing' that strategy requires or to the desperation that strategy answers to, evident also in the case of business relationships, that to paraphrase Lady Macbeth requires one to screw one's courage to the sticking place (Act 1, scene 7, 59–61). The use of the word strategic in relation to CR is accompanied by words of fixation like 'embed' or 'integrate'. Similarly, writing about eking competitive advantage out of corporate strategy, Harvard Business scholar Michael Porter refers to the concept as "the overall plan for a diversified company" (1987, 43)—in other words, the thing that will fix a diverse entity together.

Elsewhere (1987, 43) while discussing competitive positioning, Porter also describes how thinking about 'clustering'—that is, being located amid a range of linked activities—should feed into corporate strategy. Indeed the dependence of strategy on 'linkages' is a theme too in his essay with Mark Kramer on CSR, strategy and society (2000). Throughout his work, he guides strategists to give thought to how value and strategy can flourish from shared efforts while of course, though somewhat paradoxically, giving competitive advantage. Finding common cause and resources sits well with his view of strategy "as building defenses against the competitive forces or finding a position in the industry where the forces are weakest" (2006).

In keeping with this, it may seem that on occasion strategy veers into the realm of the programmatic. For example, in addressing how structure plays a role in the autopoeisis of systems, Luhmann (1996) pinpoints identities of various kinds as placeholders for expectations. Identities carry expectations so if identities (things that are identical) are projected, you can project expectations and give at least some things in the environment some sense of stability. "One thereby establishes connections and distinctions" (Luhmann 1996, 313).

Luhmann types four expectational nexuses: persons, roles, programs and values – in increasing levels of abstraction. People can play with the first two—persons and their roles—abstracting them so that they sit alongside each other with very different expectations emerging from each. Luhmann also adds:

> A person can go beyond this by not restricting himself to the behavioural possibilities open to an individual person. We call the order of expectations that

> results from this *programs*. This concept, which is seldom used in sociology, is chosen to encompass orientation toward goals and toward conditions (or programming by goals and by conditions). A program is a complex of conditions for the correctness (and thus the social acceptability) of behaviour. The level of programs becomes independent of the level of roles to arrive at this abstractness if the behaviour of more than one person has to be regulated and made expectable. Thus a surgical operation is not only a role performance but a program… The degree of detail involved in establishing expectations can differ greatly, as can, correspondingly, the provision for including chance and for the possibility of changing the program while the program is being executed" (317).

With the label of program, he is conveying the fixity and the correctness of strategies that I wish to capture. Indeed, in the footnotes, Luhmann also references how: "[t]he concept of strategy can be assigned to the concept of program. Programs can be designated as strategies if and insofar as one provides for them to change, *on occasion*, while they are being carried out. The advantage of a selection fixed in advance is then replaced by specifying the information that would be an occasion for changing the program in specific respects" (577, fn 110, emphasis added).

In other words, he proposes that programs (fixed) can become strategies (emphasis on mutable) on very special occasions. However, while he separates these two, makes the programmatic a reluctant and conditional strategy in a special concession, I want to pay attention to the programmatic with the strategic or vice versa – the paradoxical-sounding movement within the concept of 'strategy' as applied to community involvement, of the wish for certainty or for tying things together as well as the confrontation this involves and vice versa. In the case of CR, to achieve the maintenance of everyone, BFR is appropriating strategy and turning it back on business like a mirror to instigate a confrontation and a simultaneous tying down on various levels—the outcome of which will also be reflected upon, presumably driving ongoing confrontations/tyings down.

For instance Gemma who heads up the community involvement program, as well as a colleague consultant, Marian, illustrated how they articulated strategic corporate community involvement as a prelude to bringing companies and community groups together.

> Sometimes I call it strategic community investment because it really is about companies investing in their community and that can range from financial investment but primarily what we're really promoting is investment of their people and it's really that transfer of skills and time and knowledge that exists within the workforce into the community and voluntary sector and so really… our approach is very much bespoke and sit down with the company and say what is your business objective and align that business objective to your community involvement program. It can be HR, it can be being seen as a good neighbor, there's many benefits to having a good community involvement programme.

Hence, in this case 'strategy' should facilitate the company recognizing the need for a new engagement and putting an *alignment on objectives* for the relationship including a transfer of resources, specifically placing an emphasis on words like expertise and skills. However, not only would strategy imply aligning objectives here but it *must* also mean *aligning outcomes*, having a handle on them—valuable rhetoric no doubt for companies for whom the language of 'strategy' promises certainty and results[7]—and ensuring company and community are tied throughout.

> G: we met with [company C] today and they're at that point where they realize yep we're doing a lot in the community, we're giving a lot of money, it's very ad hoc and to quote the CEO, she said we can't get a handle around what it is
>
> M: it's not strategic
>
> G: absolutely. It's not tangible. They don't know what the impact is at the end and so … it's just ad hoc at the moment and for companies …, uniquely placed in many communities to actually have very positive impact socially and economically.

Echoing Sam's urging earlier, to merge economic, social and environmental interests—the essence of the Brundtland report's definition of sustainable development

(World Commission on Environment and Development 1987)—there was a disconnect between reality and just such a goal (e.g. no ‘handle’, ‘not tangible’). It seems easy to figure out that eliminating the ad hoc through strategy, involving an *organized plan*, would produce an impact on the community and align the business’s financial goals with social and environmental performance. For many companies these intertwined benefits—merging financial and social goals for instance—were to do with “staff morale, staff development, staff engagement”. Gemma talked about the value for the company of allowing staff to bring *their* values to work. However, failing that, the unplanned and the unstrategic is also unsustainable. The absence of all such alignments and the plan to align them helps evacuate the strategic.

But the company wasn’t the only beneficiary of sustainability rhetoric tied to making this confrontation/fixing. In a way it was BFR’s strategy to tie itself to companies and then to tie companies to communities by invoking strategy and sustainability to each of them. The community group was also being challenged to engage with business and for a similar reason. Gemma continued.

> G: there is alot of money coming from the EU... but often those communities don't have capacity to effectively consult with the community they live with and effectively manage those resources... But if you're going into a regeneration programme or working in business, they can bring that business acumen with them... effectively groups can end up in a situation that they're not sustainable anymore because they don't have that business acumen on it… they were saying our board are all voluntary and the staff are highly professionalised and the team [was saying] we haven't got an increment in our salaries in a couple of years and how do you approach that to a board of management who are all voluntarily giving of their time but at the end of the day we're going to have to leave these jobs because [salary] hasn't gone up with inflation
>
> M: nobody was thinking of it as sustainable and long term
>
> G: and staff were leaving. Why were they leaving?
>
> M: yeah

> G: and it's a hard thing sometimes to mention. Sometimes it is good to have a business person on a board who's thinking of all the resources – is not just thinking ok we're getting that strand of funding from here. First thinking right, what's the human resource element within the organisation and volunteerism.

Clearly the knowledge and knowhow that a business would impart in making this ‘strategic involvement’ or ‘investment’, entailed not just skills like financial management but a certain way of thinking—thinking ‘with their head’ as Gemma has put it elsewhere but also thinking ‘in the long term’ about how to equip this project to last. That *plan* for how to tie certain resources to certain outcomes that bridged the relationship also required that the parties would become *legible* to one another—identifying ‘what’s the human resource element’ and so on.

To become strategic in this domain at least, seems to be about pausing, asking questions about the possible risks to the life of the community venture because of the things outside its direct control that it is dependent on—resource supplies, staff needs—as well as making a plan and a process to identify and to deal with them. To become strategic is to make a system where sustainability is intrinsic.

The holy grail at stake for both was sustainability—something that can be alluded to in many ways including phrases such as ‘high social capital’—a vibrant thriving community, good to live in, good to work in. For the community group the benefit was to solve social issues efficiently, with ‘muscle’ and a sense that they were trying everything with a steady stream of resources. For the company indirect benefits would flow from putting their practices behind the community. Indirectly, so the logic goes, all—companies, community groups and communities—become sustainable.

However, for the community without seeing the new risks to its own future, the new benefits would remain out of reach: unless you understand the need to worry about sustainability—raising wages with inflation for instance, or visualize the risk of connection with business—the wonderful gift of say, accountancy or human resources management expertise is meaningless or undesirable. For the company, without understanding the benefits of relationships and networks to creating a place that is good for business (no repairs from vandalism, having educated people locally, avoiding employee 'safety' money and insurance) they could not take the (financial and reputational) risk of facilitating HR or accountancy staff secondments to local community groups. Risks and benefits are of a pair.

This was not an example of the formal scenario planning which was nonetheless extending its reach from origins in post World War Two nuclear strategizing (Kahn 1960) into the more mundane but more extensive task of imagining futures and planning societies in a post-industrial society (cf. Lindgren and Bandhold 2003, 34). Rather it was a less formal derivative. The Shell Corporation's view of the future of societies and energy (cf. Davis-Floyd 1998; Shell Corporation) was being presented in Ireland by BFR and by Shell executives attending EU policy discussions at a Dublin think-tank (The Institute of International and European Affairs 2008). These were being aired alongside more original state efforts (National Economic and Social Development Office 2009) to describe 'FuturesIreland' drawing on international futurologists promoting 'futures literacy' (Miller 2007).

As such, between business and community groups, the skill on hand was that of the now everyday conjuring of the future and all that is unknown (Beck 1992). While this was the ideal starting point, even having such a conversation could be an uphill battle. Some companies were approaching their involvement in the community in an unstrategic way where it was all about meeting without engagement—or a more obvious confrontation. There was no intention of shared risks, planning or mutual legibility—things that would tie together. Gemma identified one that expected that they could just call up and ask BFR to find a community group for them to work with.

> G: I think what they're doing is not strategic. There's an expectation that it's just pulling these things out of our socks. There's no real drive towards looking at impact and change… it's very much about quick fixes and they think this model works. We've advised them differently and we've told them of other projects and frameworks that we would advise and they were just happy to go along with the way it was so in my head it's not strategic. We're spending an awful lot of hours working on it for not really much societal gain…They're all over the country and it's not even, there's no kind of objectives written down. It's just really I think ad hoc.

Again the idea of being ad hoc came up and it was precisely about there being too much adaptation and confrontation *without* a corresponding 'fixing'- neither fixing of their own internal thinking nor fixing of a relationship between the community group and the company.

Companies were not the only ones that could have difficulty taking a proposed engagement seriously. Similarly, community groups could think this was all suspect. As Gemma noted: "while there is good will to get involved in the community—because … traditionally, the community and voluntary sector have worked more with the statutory sector—there sometimes is a shyness of working with business [with attitudes like] 'But sure what would business want to work with us for?' and sure 'Why, sure the only thing business can offer is money.'"

But it seems that in some cases at least, community groups could be persuaded.

> G: It's a slow change. Some organisations realise absolutely because there's been loads of work trying to do joined up thinking between government and communities and essentially business has always been missing from that equation. Why I don't know. And you'd look at loads of strategies and there's always a gap there – where is business? Because they've a central part to play … I know food

> poverty is a government issue and a community issue but also industry has a role to play in that in terms of food production and how it markets its food … but that's typical of policy and when we approach community groups like typically some would go yeah. They see it. They can see it straight away. Others – that's why we run those workshops [coaching community groups on the potential in alignments with the 'stranger' of business]... It lights up very slowly and then they get it. And some you'll never convert and like even now I was in a meeting yesterday and there was some hostility to the whole idea of business and it's almost like 'Well what does business want to get out of it?' and I said 'Of course there are business objectives. We all want to work for a good organisation. You choose to work for an NGO because you believe in their culture and some people believe in the company's culture and that's their responsibility to the community. So that's the reason why the company wants to get involved and companies are made up of individuals who want to do the right thing.

Hence in theory, in the world of CR advocates, 'strategy' assembles together (and banishes others) a range of concepts and practices that bind company processes with community activities towards a goal worth pushing through barriers for—sustainability. Similarly, strategy promises the community group a better outcome, tapping into their need for resources—financial or skills (cf. Bosso, 1995). For both companies and community groups, a partnership would involve recognizing new shared risks and benefits, planning towards sustainability, accommodating mutual legibility so that skills and existing corporate processes and projected outcomes can be aligned with community needs, disciplining the company so that the decisions *do* stick and the correct steps follow one after another. It is reflexive and future oriented. This strategy carries a certain amount of expectation.

Getting engaged: Making legible, Setting Limits

The process of engagement, the confrontation that also fixes or ties depended a great deal on making each party more legible to the other with for instance, assurances in workshops for community groups that companies were made up of people too, or, that companies and community groups both had a stake in a vibrant community and in efficiently chasing that good. BFR played an important role in introducing companies and communities—introducing changes mostly on the companies particularly through an amount of making legible.

With experience for example, Marian was able to develop a progress chart that acted as a ‘diagnostic tool’ reading the efforts of companies and mapping them accordingly on a spectrum of strategic corporate community involvement. (Consider these activities in light of the scenario planning literature discussed earlier.) By helping companies to understand exactly where they were and where they could be on a spectrum of responsible companies, their progress through responsibility towards the community could be mapped and presented as a competitive benefit. The sheer existence of such a spectrum conjured the specter for companies of anonymous peers doing better out there. It provided what one might call a masked legibility of relative positions. It was a way of teaching the company about this arena in a specific way—providing the best examples and by grading the companies against them, encouraging continual improvement, deeper community partnerships, linked more closely to the company’s actual business. For BFR, it clearly communicated the work that was still required towards betterment.

BFR, the strategist of this interest or faith in strategy between company and community group, extended the tactic of making legible to company surveys, meetings and eventually engagement between a company and a community group. Gemma talked me through the process of bringing companies to consider a deeper relationship with community groups.

> G: putting together a community involvement program, it's not just a quick fix… there's a process involved… [This company] had typically been giving financial

> donations to charities and had very great ethos internally of fundraising but they became lethargic with that because people were fundraised out. They said surely there's more that we could do and they approached ourselves. Now they had carried out a staff survey at that point, which was great, and normally we would often start at that step. They had already carried that out and there's a couple of areas that they identified. There was [four disadvantaged groups and topics of interest for staff] and they were quite an unusual company because we'd often say as well “Start slow and then pilot it in one area and then see about”. However, in hindsight, [the company was] so committed that they were actually able to pull it off and they rolled out the programme across [various cities] and really what we did was almost like a community audit of each [city, identifying potential community groups who might be interested in forming a relationship]... The difficulty for [the company] was that we then invited a cross-section of those groups in and once you meet the groups it's very hard to say no to them so they supported them all [laughter] which is not necessarily the best thing to do... but it rolled out anyway and it was very effective. Part of that process [was] obviously meeting with their groups, we … did a follow up return visit to the actual projects we partnered with, with a steering group within [the company] and then we had a community fair [where the groups came in to meet staff] and we had one in [each of the company sites].

Our laughter in the middle of this description, or mine at least, was to do with the victory of the heart in the supposedly cold bureaucratic machine. With staff surveys, community group visits to the company and company visits to community groups a shortlist of companies (or maybe not so short in this case) was chosen to work with.

Gemma went on to describe the variety of involvement that the company—senior management as well as other grades—had with the identified groups across the country, with staff, in keeping with the company’s line of business, befriending older people, teaching them how to use communications devices as well as working with another of the community groups on a vision of where it wanted to be by 2015—“ looking at everything from staffing to office space – you name it – the whole, looking at [the community group] as a system and see what it needs if it really wants to reach its targets of 2015 how it needs to grow and develop in that space and time”. From learning about the group, the company worked itself into helping the group to think about sustainability. They commenced a similar senior-level job with another of the community groups.

However the benefits to businesses were not always easily quantified despite efforts to make them legible. On another occasion, as well as her own estimations of where the companies were, Gemma described how the process of getting involved would typically be set within a framework of self-measurement that the company is guided through. As well as staff surveys and meeting community groups, at the outset of projects she would ask company CR managers to define their company's motivation and its objectives in terms of outcomes, (not outputs) so that they could be measured at the end of the process.

On an aside, the terminology of outcomes and outputs (and the emphasis on the former) is a feature of the so-called 'logic model,' itself a subset of evaluation research whose purpose is to help evaluate systematically and fairly whether or how social programs work or have an effect. Its purpose is "to investigate social programs (such as substance abuse treatment programs, welfare programs, mental health programs, or employment and training programs). For each project, an evaluation researcher must select a research design and method of data collection that are useful for answering the particular research questions posed and appropriate for the particular program investigated" (Engel and Schutt 2005, 306).

According to Engel and Schutt, the method has roots in "the expansion of the federal government during the Great Depression and World War II. Large Depression-era government outlays for social programs stimulated interest in monitoring program output, and the military effort in World War II led to some of the necessary review and contracting procedures for sponsoring evaluation research" (306). These became necessary attachments in some government contracts and the authors indirectly suggest that this supported the growth of the US research industry in the late 60s and early 70s—including the RAND Corporation and SRI International. Currently the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund also require evaluation of programs funded in other countries. While many evaluation firms closed in the early 1980s with “the decline of many Great Society programs” (307), the requirement from government for quality assurance reviews and performance and results has supported the ongoing development of evaluation research. Now there are also studies of the evaluation research itself (Davies, Petrosino, and Chalmers 1999).

As a methodology to evaluate social programs, evaluation research considers several components: *the inputs* (be it the target population or the resources deployed with the intention of effecting change), *the program process*, the service or treatment that should have an impact on the target population; *the outputs* such as the numbers of people who attended or were trained, and *the outcomes* which are the impacts on the target population such as improved social functioning. An increasingly popular way of planning these components and for summarizing the entire program is through a logic model—“nothing more than a picture or chart of the different components that go into a program. There is no single logic model design” (310), (cf. Martin and Kettner 2009; Weiss 1972). It should identify a problem and a target population, a proposed process with accompanying inputs and the subsequent outputs and outcomes, typically moving through lists in columns under each of the headings, from left to right. While the methodology has its own specific trajectory and objectives, and one must also be mindful of a context of ‘performance’ where contemporary evaluations increasingly demand metrics and outputs (Dean 2009, 193; Lyotard 1984), one can see how well it sits with Strathern's concept of audit culture (2000) where striving for accountability "endorses government through the twin passage points of economic efficiency and good practice" (1), bears the truth of credibility and justifies the allocation of resources, hope and energies—all from within.

For Gemma, once they had envisaged what the outcomes or measures of the involvement with community groups should be, the other important question for companies was whether they had the resources to manage the involvement—the skills, the time. The second, implementation phase, would take those intentions and put together policies and procedures, rolling out staff involvement and communicating about that. Finally, at the end of the project, the impact of the actions should actually be measured.

> E: and have alot of companies gotten to the impact measurement phase?
>
> G: not yet... impact measurement is not really captured by anybody I think in a significant way. I mean what they do capture maybe is input and getting some case studies around it but not with that proper evaluation … so where are we with outcomes? And outcomes is like what's the change and the change in behaviour that makes it valuable and like some places would go as far as looking at the return on investment.

Outcomes must be a fixed dimension of strategic investment and the work was ongoing to ensure that took hold. But how did BFR persuade community groups—against the better judgment of some—to take on new risks (of being involved with business) in pursuit of benefits? How was it helping community groups to become legible, to see the risks in particular ways, and to chase outcomes of sustainability?

BFR explicitly coached community groups on what business is, what it might want and how their own wants could tap into that in a productive way. This coaching was achieved using the guidebook analyzed earlier as well as workshops with the groups, working through an elaborated half of the guide that analyzed their needs and putting together a proposal and a plan to approach companies with a view to strategic involvement. This approach was necessary to prepare or enable community groups to consider business as a partner in the first place, to see the risks of engagement mitigated by risks of *not* engaging.

> G: so that workshop is, and this guide, is based on trying for groups to see how they can engage business in a non-financial way – looking at their work plans, seeing well what objectives have we not met in the last year because of lack of resources? Could we get those resources from business in terms of planning – whatever that might look like - or setting up a new youth service and so we need volunteers. Can we go to business for time off for staff to [help with] that? And also looking at the financial planning – IT, did they buy in consultancy? Could that consultancy have come from business instead? So looking at all those ways… I'm out of the meeting there a few hours ago from [one company]. … They're in [an area] but they're not sure, they say "we've engaged some groups but groups are unclear on what their own needs are that they can get through business" and so our role is in this respect is in trying to bridge that gap. I'm working with groups through these workshops. They're free workshops. We delivered around 19 to date and we delivered them nationally… [However] we're a business network and so community groups – we're saying don't wait for us to come to you to try and build that link. We will endeavour to help them in any way by putting plans together to approach business with but our resources are limited… [T]hat is limited on a national basis as well so we're trying to give them the tools and skills to proactively go after business…

As well as BFR being limited by its own resources, it encouraged community groups to reckon with their own management resources also as they considered instigating a project. That too can only be planned or tied in by being known.

> G: [Groups] put together a wish list of what they want companies to get involved with but it's not a priority thing. The community group won't prioritise it as a need – they're so under resourced that they'll never be able [to identify] that they have a priority that's probably not a priority and then it's looking at breaking it down. Do they have they proper process and structures in place internally to take on this business support and [I don't think half of them do]. Do you have internal buy in whether it's their own management committee – their own, other volunteers, other staff because they can feel threatened and kind of go, 'Why do we need these – aren't I doing my job right?'

In other words the risk to the group's sustainability in *not* engaging had to tip the balance among all staff that feared engagement for personal and principled reasons.

Another element was to assure groups of their own expertise – that there was no risk of their expertise being replaced and rather that they had expertise to bring. In this confrontation certain key things were to be fixed. Here community expertise was fixed as out of reach of business.

> G: I always point out – you're the experts. You know your community better than …You're doing a brilliant job – reassure them... You have to reassure them that they're doing a really good job. This is not, it's about cooperation rather than – there's no, if there's something business can help you with of course it makes good business sense for them to get involved because of the reasons. But something that you're not interested in absolutely fine…

In setting up this partnership between business and community groups, another thing that must be fixed is expectations—meaning the projection of what might be reasonably possible and its communication and reiteration. This also fixed the relationship in terms of the scope of corporate involvement right up to their exit plan.

The prediction of exit was not a cynical move. Simply, from BFR's point of view that was the safest, most certain or fixed way to introduce and understand the "nature" of business: it is likely to want to move on and thus it is to manage the relationship badly, to set false expectations and to undermine the reputation and thus the likelihood of drawing on other businesses' resources in future *not* to mention and prepare for that eventuality at the outset. It was to warn of the confrontation dimension while also tying together in implementing this strategy. A warning of confrontation became a fixing, a point of certainty.

> G: we would always say the role for business is not to deliver key services and that kind of whole history of social policy in Ireland has been [that] communities provide key government services but the role for business in that is to add value to that work. It's not to take over the work from the community – absolutely not… and it's not the role for business either to go in and set up a project, a new project and run it because there's no exit strategy from that. You can commit to a couple

> of years but industry changes and that so they can't commit longer than a year to three years … but you also need to think around, it has to be sustainable. We would not be promoting one-off activities … we want to build up a partnership with a company and that takes a year and up to three years and making it really sustainable and they get to understand the needs of the community and the community gets to understand the needs of the company in the partnership model.

The expectation of exit was set and limited the possible scope of involvement by the company. But by setting an expectation of exit in three or so years, the relationship was also freed up to think about what could be achieved together in the interim and by working to the plan, a degree of trust was engendered. There were no surprises.

> G: There's a beginning middle and end to that project... maybe if [the company is] coming in to help around financial planning or that by the end of three years all the processes are in place – the staff get trained up and the software for accounting and the treasurer has been mentored and a shadow treasurer has been trained in those three years as well and so absolutely you build their capacity to move on… I think if you've got a strong project plan in place at the outset and you work with what you have in place then it's a very natural thing all along. There's no surprises – no surprises when if the company does maybe exit, the community organisation aren't going 'Jeez they've gone.' Or staff aren't going 'Like how come we've pulled out of this project?' – but, it's the natural order of things. There's closure there.

Unexpected Victories

But how did the relationship work? Via a mixture of third party and first hand accounts it seemed that on the positive side, when community groups were open to the idea, they quickly got it and threw their energy into finding companies to work with.

> G: We got … great feedback from one of the participants who was at one of our workshops and she said, she was working on a project and it was rebuild or redevelopment of the centre and she said "I didn't know where to start – there's been very little money" and so she came to the workshop and went home on the train and "I was buzzing!" she said. "I knew what I actually had to do," and so really what she did was engage local business and say "I'm not after you for money but can you do this for me? Can you do this for me?" and she got [it].

According to Gemma another company “went and did some training for the staff of [one community group] on pitching, on selling, on marketing and the feedback was terrific from [the group]. They were saying like this is, it's like instead of giving a man a fish to eat, teach him how to fish and really that's what they've been able to do with [the group] and the benefits have been really really good there.”

Of course, despite all the expectation setting and the effort to make one legible to the other this was not necessarily a comfortable relationship. Sometimes it felt like the confrontation of strangers that it often was. Typical hiccups between the community group and the company were to do with communication. According to Gemma “needless to say, communication is the biggest fall down … and then you're called in … Or expectations aren't kept real. They think it's going to work faster than the organization are and so those are all the kinds of pitfalls – or there's a change of personnel on either side and that can be a real...” With experience, new things to fix in the confrontation came to light.

At this point I wish to consider power relations between the companies and communities because the threat of conquest or exploitation of the community sector in their proximity to ‘caring’ or ‘responsible’ corporations is a central concern of many anthropologists (cf. Welker 2009). Indeed, community groups were clearly beginning to look differently at their own internal set up and as Gemma put it, were “professionalizing”. In one particular case Gemma mentioned a former religious group of Christian Brothers. “They're moving away from - traditionally all staff being brothers to now recognizing that they need to follow more of a business model and are employing a lot more senior people from externally… They're recruiting externally and recognising that they have to run on more of a business model and professionalise it a little bit more than they would traditionally have."

Or, at a training workshop for community, groups were asked "would people be willing to…?" I felt somewhat uncomfortable that these groups would have to figure out their resources and try to find additional resources beyond government funding agencies. They seemed uncomfortable too.

What can one say about power in this situation? Many consider power to be "the ability to modify, use, consume or destroy… a power that stems from aptitudes directly inherent in the body or relayed by external instrument" (Foucault 2000, 337). One can easily imagine that a company would have this kind of power, in terms of objective capacities and resources.

But as Foucault (2000) interprets it, power "is tied to relationships between partners …an ensemble of actions that induce others and follow from one another" (2000, 337). It is to conduct others' actions. The tricky thing is that in order to conduct others' actions, others must be able to act and so must, to a certain extent also, be free. This means that "[e]very power relationship implies, at least in potential, a strategy of struggle, in which the two forces are not superimposed, do not lose their specific nature, or do not finally become confused" (346). That is because "power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are 'free'" (342). There is a 'permanent provocation' between power and freedom (342).

As I will discuss below, this strategy of struggle between two 'free' entities seems the most appropriate diagnosis of the nascent reformulation of the relationship between community groups and companies in Ireland as they confronted/fixed to one another with their eye on a particular goal. While successful partnerships were slow to catch on, each party seemed to be changed by the other as well as gaining something from the other. While the group adopted limited expertise that it relativized alongside its own towards sustainability, the company adopted a worldview and new company practices towards sustainability. But for insight to this, it is also necessary to consider another player working around the fringes of this zone—government proper—for its role in indirectly supporting a certain dynamic between companies and community.

While community looks natural, neutral and appears extra-political, a “zone of human relations” (168), as Rose notes (1999) government has used the word ‘community’ since the 1960s (community care etc.) but despite the connotations of care, it was “actually a diagram for the reorganisation of publicly provided, bureaucratically organized and professionally staffed services… as a buffer against both the impersonal forces of the global market and increasingly weak and incompetent central governing authorities’” (171 quoting Rifkin 1995, 238). As Gemma noted several times, similarly community has been the key service deliverer ‘on the ground’ in Ireland, funded by government, an extension of government.

A bonus arising from being accorded such status according to Rose, is that “[A]s community becomes a valorised political zone, a new political status has been given to the ‘indigenous’ authorities of community. For to govern communities, it seems one must first of all link oneself up with those who have, or claim, moral authority in ‘the black community’ or ‘the local community’… [T]he authority of community authorities, precisely because it is governed by no explicit codes and rules of conduct, is often even more difficult to contest than that of experts and professionals” (189).

At a session to coach community groups, on how to approach business, that authority was evident and seemingly available to the community group to deploy. As we did a mock phone call to a company, that first call to try and identify a CR manager or someone who would engage with the idea of helping out the community group, the question was raised as to whether the groups should work with this (pretend) company. (The notes say they have done something questionable.) But the community people chose them as a target company precisely *because* they might want a chance to *redeem* themselves.

Arguably part of the appeal for companies is that in becoming proximate to community groups, where both would be legible to each other, business could become associated with or adopt this power, this “moral field binding persons to durable relations, [this] space of *emotional relationships* through which *individual identities* are constructed through their bonds to *micro-cultures* of values and meanings” (1999, 172). In chasing this good, it’s clear that companies didn’t have *all* the resources that are now necessary for good staff relations for instance.

So against Cruikshank (1993), while strategic corporate-community involvement seemed related and subject to the same suspicion as ‘empowerment’ rhetoric (as an expanding governance that framed subjectivities of ‘poverty’ as poor and powerless in 1960s USA so that they could then be ‘empowered’) and where the Irish community groups were framed as lacking specific capacities such as “business acumen” or “forward thinking”, in important other ways, these groups are part of a governmentalized coalition of groups that are positioned as *the* authorities on social issues but where now, the thinking about these issues and their resolution should also enlist business—this time under the *joint*-banner of sustainability rather than by ‘injection’ of something like empowerment from one to the other.

Nonetheless, where the role of government-proper seems to have helped create a context for the relationship to fix (because ‘community’ has authority), one must also speculate as to the extent to which central government and its dominant role with community groups, might also have been playing an indirect role in keeping community groups and businesses apart also through the question of sustainability. In one particular example the contribution of business was clearly not the center of the group’s existence nor a significant hindrance nor aid in its most pressing problem which was the excruciating tension of trying to maintain public funding sometimes in competition with upholding community values. To the community group, thus fixated on money from government and on community values, the proffered contribution of business as expertise would take a significant leap of faith to be any kind of alternative. Indeed it was just this funding crux, this dependency on government that BFR was trying to tackle or dilute when it organized a seminar for community groups given by investment managers where they were encouraged to see the possibilities of treating funds as endowments and living off the interest.

For one campaigner, because sustainability was a word with mixed meanings, she referred to her goals for her local group as “profit for non-profit”. She predicted without much anxiety that her community coffee dock would “never be sustainable” and so “they would not be able to survive [financially] without the [public] funding.” If it was taken away they would be “at a minus” but that fear was never going to make her abandon “community affordability” a distinction that signaled that it was something different to ordinary market pricing as if there are two economies one where sustainability is financial and another where sustainability is about sustaining principles.

Ironically to keep or sustain community, she had to fight against the costs of financial sustainability. She said: “when we were with [one government funding] programme, it was a three year contract and… it was pushing for [us] to be sustainable so all our energy was going and we had to make money, we had to and then you were losing the whole community end of it—really why you were here because it was if we don’t make money we won’t get funded and so all the energy was going in to making money, making money, making money, make money.” Then, as government figured out how to balance community groups’ financial sustainability with community sustainability—or what sustainability should mean, the approach changed. “When [a different agency] took over the community service programme they had different criteria and they said if you make money, you won’t get funding… they weren’t out to push us onto being fully out there [financially] sustainable on our own’”

To focus on the “community end of it” as she saw it meant using the wages received from funding agencies to keep her sales prices down and to redistribute any profit she made to local youth projects and so on. “The aim as well is trying to create employment…and I suppose the other aim would be not to lose them, to keep people in a job … We don’t want to let the staff go, we don’t want to reduce the hours because then it’s not good for the community. It doesn’t meet the community’s needs.”

Not only that but she suggests that all the employees work harder and share the work even though one group knows that other employees who are funded by a different public agency in the same community premises are better paid.

> There's times I've often gone in the kitchen and I've cooked whatever they needed cooking – go in and I'd put on the apron and the hat and in you go…. they're a great bunch and they're always willing and there's never a problem. Like if somebody's out sick I'll ring somebody else "Well can you come in for half seven in the morning?" "Yeah no problem". It's a good community spirit and most of them that work in the kitchen, say half of them would be from the actual community… and I have to say the pay is not very good. The community service programme does not pay, the staff of the community and youth centre. Their staff come through [the local authority for the area]. Now they would be here for the upkeep of the centre … and to show people …where they needed to go. Now they are paid more than what we are paid, our staff work harder and would be under more pressure than they would. They know that they get more pay but it doesn't phase them.
>
> EM: they're getting something else out of it then
> EB: yeah definitely, pride in what they do, training and a job.

Despite the pressure to find other resources, the place of business in the horizons of her group was welcome but relative, not all encompassing, with a place alongside her own expertise, for helping realize the vision more quickly.

> To get people to join the board is very hard, very very hard and especially business people because they don't have the time and so the likes of BFR even coming along – I mean there's a big change – there's a big vision there now and it's like okay the vision was there but they're pushing it and things are coming together and where it probably would have taken us a lot longer.

The picture is slightly different from the company point of view. Despite the pressure of short financial resources, key to financial sustainability, community groups adherence to community values wouldn't necessarily be won over by company support and in the following example, this resistance disrupted the company's plans.

At a networking session for companies, June outlined how her company chose their partner on the basis of being reputable, of alignment with the brands, their geographic spread (Irish and nationally), how they addressed the criterion of social exclusion and generating employee involvement. After much negotiation in the end the group wouldn't give the company title association or would "not sacrifice title branding".

June said that her organization had the money [read capacity] and had done a lot of research but it emerged after a series of meetings that the group wouldn't do that.

Similarly, June was also quick to warn off another CR manager from trying to manage communications too much. That organization was trying to choose charities for staff to work with. The CR manager mentioned that her company was a huge supporter of a particular charity but that no one knew about it. She mused that she should be "leveraging" it more but at that point June jumped in, a little urgently to say that the other company should be careful about the idea of 'leveraging.' It may not be appropriate.

Having secured a partner to work with June seemed to be approaching the relationship in a genuine way. Just as she had been advised by BFR, she relayed the advice to the other companies that they needed to warn the partner at the outset that they should begin thinking now of what would happen in an exit situation. There are responsibilities on both sides. June set targets and reviewed her process with the group each year and held regular meetings, one on her site and another in theirs. She talked about there being a lot of building trust in the early stages.

Here one can see that where community will only bend so far, these company executives were more pliant in their eagerness to play an honest role in the space of community. If Cruikshank asserts that empowerment reifies the actions of the powerful in favor of problematizing the inactions of the poor, then Strategic Corporate Community Involvement meant calling forth, involving and changing the actions of the powerful as one dimension of a multi-faceted problem. And, to compound that further, a recent development is that BFR published a compilation of company activity nationally and its impact.

In another example, through the kind of authority that community groups had, they were facilitating and extending the idea of sharing labor for the social to the company. This activity would see the traditional place of corporations—as if isolated from the social—being dismantled within limits. One company with property interests enlisted its most junior staff, fresh out of college, to run community engagement projects. Gemma said: “initially some of them were probably a bit, you know, out of university, we're going to make money and we're all savvy and brilliant and some of them … surprised me as well. I think they learned an awful lot along the way.”

Indeed the community group involved were pushing, “were saying we want you to understand what we're doing … we want you to be our life long advocates so that you understand what we're doing.”

> G: [the company newbies] had to do assessments of different [locations connected to]… schools and community centers. [Community groups] never have dedicated buildings and what [they are] pushing for is that they'll have dedicated resources for themselves but needed to look at a business plan around how they could make this sustainable. So [the newbies visited] different [locations] to see what worked well …

As they did their investigations, the newbies came face to face with people their own age who lived in vastly different circumstances. “[L]ooking in the mirror, that could be any one of them so that starkness but also a level of hope that em, - there's huge problems in [this area] but there's this oasis of wonderfulness called [community group] who can help alleviate that and if you work together this is what is possible … Well obviously it has worked well enough that we're doing it in year two now.”

The value of this kind of work to the students personally was emphasized. Gemma saw it as being about empowerment through partnership. But picking up on another dimension of Cruikshank’s critique, in an interesting counter example what

Gemma was describing here was just as much empowerment for *company staff* as for community groups.

> G: There's nothing worse than a feeling of powerlessness over something. It's hugely frustrating and often there's a lot of bureaucracy and systems and processes within a company but if you afford an employee an opportunity to fulfill some of their creativeness in the community setting then I think that's a wonderful thing to do… if they can participate maybe in a community project where the company supports them in kind of empowering them to get involved in the community to make change

If anything employees' capacity to act was being transformed as they were brought to consider alternative futures and to reorient and to reorganize their own conduct at home and at work to that end. Company governance was being effected through employees.

What was also being achieved here was an ethical effect from strategy or to interpret how Foucault (1990) describes it, a strategic dimension to ethics. Consider how the characteristics of strategy echo his ethical schema—the confrontation and reflection (mode of subjectivation) at the level of the personal and of the company, where one recognizes that one's consideration of the world and of others (the 'ethical substance' of this case) is deficient, prompting a fixing to something different, to being a better contributor to a society that is under threat (the 'telos' of this case). There is also the work—the learning, the working out and fixing of new practices (ethical work)—to make the change throughout the body of the employee and the organization.

However, while operating in that gap between proposal and commitment or in problematization (Faubion 2001, 8) which is symptomatic of the ethical and while the company is both a subject and an object of such engagements, the entity of the company was persuaded to engage by the benefits to its workforce and community relations as well as by the promise of longevity and more certain profits. The telos of the company's ethical work had a utilitarian dimension that made its effort close to but nonetheless a *retreat from* the limits of the ethical such as “[p]olitical domination, economic exploitation, and psychosocial subjugation” (7).

The pressures to the ethical exist, underscored by a concern with sustainability writ large—hence belonging to what I have termed an ethical ecology and comparable to what Rose (1999) has characterized as the ethico-political (see Introduction). Indeed it is from his considerations of the vaunting of the idea of ‘community’ that Rose derives the term. He describes ethico-politics (188) in relation to the third way, to the political space that present-day community represents driving a question of how we all can live together that makes the key question of liberalism about creating a framework where one is able to tolerate the other’s extreme difference. With the media’s assistance he asserts, there is a shift away “from emphasis on morality and… towards ethics—the active and practical shaping by individuals of the daily practices of their own lives in the name of their own pleasures, contentments or fulfilments” (179).

Furthermore ethico-politics “operates, as it were, at the pole of morality. It seeks to govern a polity through the micro-management of the self-steering practices of its citizens… [It] operates at the pole of morality because it seeks to inculcate a fixed and incontestable code of conduct merely shifting the loci of authority, decision and control in order to govern better” (193). It involves “the complex construction of assemblages that will link up rather general ethical rationalities to very specific, local and technical devices for the government of conduct” (190).

I suggest that Strategic Corporate Community Involvement is indeed part of that assemblage linking general ethical rationalities to very specific, local and technical devices for the government of conduct but it adds new ones: company value and sustainability. In other words, in this new ethico-politics there is a confrontation and an opening of new ethical terrain and new practices that fix to a new sticking place under the banner of sustainability—hence my location of it in an ethical ecology.

That said, it is also important not to take the big picture too far. For now, in the every day lived experience of community groups and companies, the ethical ecology is still very spotty, riven for one thing with the inescapable need of 'filthy lucre' and what it sets in motion.

Companies can also refuse to play when a community group asserts too much social authority. Nora, a highly-placed community activist who was thinking deeply about the possibilities between community groups and business, had strong views on what would prove company commitment – that there should be no conditionality on their support for groups, that their alliances shouldn't end just because the community group might object to one of their products—the level of sugar content in the company product being fed to their kids locally for instance. For her, that would be a real test of the sincerity of the project. What direction the confrontation and fixing should or would take was still in question. Nonetheless soon after our chat we had an email exchange:

> -----Original Message-----
> From: Nora
> Sent: Thursday, July 17, 2008 7:13 PM
> To: Elise McCarthy
> Subject: RE: coffee?
>
> Elise
>
> I enjoyed our discussion. I was remembering afterwards that [a local company] had raised an interesting issue in relation to opportunities to 'act in solidarity' (my words) with residents in [the area]. I thought this was a very interesting concept and well worth thinking more about - particularly where people might have shared

needs and different experiences.
Best wishes
Nora

-----Original Message-----

Hello Nora,

I enjoyed our conversation too. Thanks once again for taking the time.

That is indeed an interesting concept. It can be cut in all kinds of ways - cynically, as impossible, or with an eye to potential. It conveys a somewhat homogeneous view of the world too.

What struck you about it?

Best,
Elise.

-----Original Message-----

Elise

I thought it raised interesting possibilities about bringing a wider range of perspectives to issues. It would be interesting to test some shared concerns - childcare, public transport, community safety (ASBOs) etc. The challenge may be to find 'issues' where the private sector is placed to unequivocally support 'disadvantaged' communities, or where there is an opportunity to include a range of perspectives as part of a total picture.

I think we might yet go back to [the company] re this. It will be interesting to see whether it is possible to move past 'charity' thinking to solidarity!

Hope all is well with you.

Nora

The goal of making community strategic for the sustainability of companies, communities and ways of life would involve a negotiation of what the relationship between company and community should now be, whether, which and how confrontations would now turn into fixings (leading to new confrontations). Hence it was also a negotiation of what strategy itself should mean for either party.

NOTES

[1] This is not necessarily true however. See Brammer and Millington's (2005) study of the benefits to reputation of being a large philanthropic donor.

[2] Becker 1962; Bohan and Shouldice 2002; Bowles and Gintis 2002; Connolly Summer; Gaffney 2005; Gaynor 2009; Gintis 2005; M Higgins 2006; Honohan 2005; National Committee on Volunteering 2002; National Economic and Social Council 2005; National Economic and Social Forum 2003; Putnam 2001; Reid 2006; Stone and Hughes 2002; Taskforce on Active Citizenship 2006a; Taskforce on Active Citizenship 2006b; Taskforce on Active Citizenship 2007a; Taskforce on Active Citizenship 2007b; Taskforce on Active Citizenship 2008

[3] One critic went so far as to say that Arensberg and Kimball's account "had more in common with the visions of obscurantist nativists and revivalists than with concrete reality. On every score – the family, the 'mutual-aid' system, the economic and cultural stability of the system, and its politics – their account ranges from the inaccurate to the fictive" (Gibbon 1973, 491). Desmond Bell (1981) also critiques this dominant functional approach to community studies in Ireland. As a method, he argues that it tends to study isolated local areas which in turn lends itself to concerns about the threat of urban-industrial modernity and forces an explanation of relations with the outside world in terms of modernization—the progress ultimately from Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft and the disappearance of community (because what had been written about couldn't be found anymore.)

[4] See also Porter (2000) who poses a similar thesis in relation to clusters. Clusters are defined as "geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers and service providers, firms in related industries, and associated institutions (e.g. universities, standards agencies, and trade associations) in particular fields that compete but also cooperate" (253). Of clusters he says: "The presence of clusters suggests that *much of competitive advantage lies outside a given company or even outside its industry*, residing instead in the locations of its business units" (254). This concept is also built into Porter and Kramer's discussion of improving the "competitive context" (2002, 6) by finding "a convergence of interests" between social and economic benefits. Members of a cluster can do this together.

[5] Social Partnership, (ESP) was an important national governance structure that rescued Ireland allegedly from the jaws of IMF intervention in the late 80s (Mac Sharry, White, and O'Malley 2000, 45). Under that threat several representative groups who had been consultees of the NESC—the National Economic and Social Council, the State-led social and economic think-tank that has advised government on social and economic policy since 1973—came together in a bid to turn the economy around. In 1986, with the urging of its Union, employer, agricultural and government consultees, NESC created the basis for agreement between those same members, with government and opposition backing, on a three-year *Programme for National Recovery* (Department of An Taoiseach 1987). A significant dimension of this effort was "the creation of a fiscal, exchange rate and monetary climate conducive to economic growth" (5), centered on debt stabilization through spending cuts and wage agreements. Seven subsequent agreements documented how the country should continue the recovery and eventually, how it should ensure everyone benefited from the growing wealth of the so-called Irish 'Celtic Tiger' economy. The complexities of how groups entered partnership are documented by Larragy (2006).

[6] Several business scholars write about how firms can gain knowledge from inter-relationships with community groups (cf. Googins, Mirvis, and Rochlin 2007; Heugens, van den Bosch, and van Riel 2002; Peloza and Falkenberg 2009; Yaziji 2004). Douglas A. Schuler in a personal communication described such gains in terms of issues expertise and organizational knowledge—where, by exposure to them and to the organizations addressing them daily, company employees gain expertise in certain issues and also how such issues might be addressed where relevant internally.

[7] Whether this promise of 'strategy' is realized is another question. While companies may use the language of strategy it is not clear that strategy is always so clearly and rationally defined by companies. Cohen et al (1972) describe a "garbage can" process which "is one in which problems, solutions, and participants move from one choice opportunity to another in such a way that the nature of the choice, the time it takes, and the problems it solves all depend on a relatively complicated intermeshing of elements. These include the mix of choices available at any one time, the mix of problems that have access to the organization, the mix of solutions looking for problems, and the outside demands on the decision makers" (16). Mintzberg (1994)

describes how strategic planning, once thought to be "'the one best way' to devise and implement strategies that would enhance the competitiveness of each business unit" (107) has "fallen from its pedestal" (107), due to a confusion between strategic planning and strategic thinking—the one about analysis and the other about synthesis and vision.

Chapter 4 - Marketplace

This chapter is about the efforts of companies to embrace the ideal kinds of relations that corporate responsibility (CR) advocates say they should have. This ideal champions collaboration, particularly along supply chains, but the data I recount is about the primary trial of collaboration explored by my interlocutors in networks with peer companies and indeed competitors. There, they are to learn from each other exactly how this supply-chain collaboration, among many other things, should work—and all in the name of corporate responsibility. These collaborating competitors provided the opportunity to see how collaboration can work—aided by competitors—and conversely, how competition can work but only through a kind of collaboration. As collaborating and competing companies spurred one another on, in tandem, these efforts, not just solely competition, might be seen as part of the motion of capitalism, or as Schumpeter (1987) might say, part of its processes of 'creative destruction.'

This discussion arises out of conversations and observations made during my fieldwork at Business for Responsibility (BFR) in Ireland between September 2007 and 2009 where collaborative relations seemed preeminent. Of its objectives for the so-called 'marketplace' pillar BFR says:

> Corporate Responsibility in the Marketplace is about the management of relationships with customers, suppliers and business partners from a sustainability perspective. With increased globalization, companies are seeking to differentiate their products and services from those of their competitors. Leading companies, governments and other institutions have begun to align their purchasing decisions with social criteria and are establishing supply chains that reflect their own value sets. Benefits to businesses of having strategic Marketplace practices include being able to control the element of risk in the supply chain, attracting and retaining key customers, being more competitive and having an increased market share (BFR brochure 2008)[1].

Surprisingly perhaps, these kinds of objectives gave rise to calls for collaboration particularly along supply chains. In late 2008 during a week celebrating CR where BFR dedicated each day to one of the so-called pillars of Workplace, Marketplace, Environment and Community, the marketplace event was about sustainable procurement. The master of ceremonies noted that “In the current climate bedeviled by economic recession and urgent environmental challenges, the event this afternoon is seeking to be a little different in that in addition to focusing on the issue of sustainability we felt that it was very important to give space to that of partnership and collaboration and for this reason we invited [three pairs of companies, each a buyer] with their supplier... to discuss the benefits that they perceive in working collaboratively” (cf. Heugens, van den Bosch, and van Riel 2002 for a discussion of the value of stakeholder integration to the company).

Similarly, at a conference I attended in London in February 2008, a Glaxo SmithKline executive speaking about the environment ended his talk by prompting the audience “to think about collaboration. Now we all have done our green strategies. We can see how we can gain competitive advantage in certain respects but actually if we all join hands as suppliers and really take this as a government, as NGOs, I’m absolutely convinced that through greater collaboration we really can make a much more meaningful impact on alot of the issues facing our organisations today.”

He was followed by Sir Mark Moody Stuart, the chairman of mining giant Anglo American. As he described that company’s efforts to address climate change-related issues, to close mines without damaging local communities and to support the treatment of HIV/AIDS among their South African employees he recalled his speaker colleague: “[W]hen you’re thinking of the challenges you face, we as a business have to proactively go out and seek other people to work with—people who in coalitions, other businesses or NGOs, civil society organizations, consumer organizations who can help put in place the frameworks which we need to address some of these problems and which can help us and we will as businesses have to argue sometimes for things which if we did them alone as our single business would not be to our advantage but if we can do them collectively, it's to both our advantage and the advantage of society generally."

During my fieldwork, the stakes involved in the collaboration that CR advocates were trying to foster or expose between companies seemed heightened by the fact that in several fora to discuss bridging the apparent divide between business and society, collaboration was also emphasized in business appeals to those seen as on the side of 'society.' Business and society should work together. The current Irish Business Employers Confederation Director General, speaking then about corporate responsibility and sustainability, called for an emphasis, not on the tension between business and society but on their interdependence. Quoting Robert F. Kennedy, he asserted that now was "the time for us to 'blend vision, reason and courage'" (Reynolds and Healy 2008, 14).

So, rather than just encapsulate a utopian world, or evoke collaboration for the sake of rhetoric, more specifically collaboration seemed intrinsic or necessary to what would make the aims of CR possible. At another conference, this time in Dublin, in describing their efforts to put and keep a label on their packets of potato chips that quoted its carbon footprint, Walkers (a Pepsi company) noted that:

> "59% of our carbon footprint is upstream of us, in our supply chain which shows that we need to work with our suppliers... We've also commissioned further research into the carbon research and into potential agricultural methods of producing our potatoes and our oils. We've also worked with our supply chain

> across the 18 months that we've [had the label] in place. We've held a CDP [Carbon Disclosure Project] supply chain collaboration conference in September 2007. We're satisfied to share with our supply chain why this matters, why this matters to us as well as why it matters to them. Our aim in doing this is to drive change in our supply chain and drive change within our business."

All decisions within the business to do with supply chain were to be analyzed against the target written on the packet of chips and if the pending change didn't support that number, the plans were revisited. They had a concern that by not taking action they might possibly do irreparable damage to their assets or draw government regulation. Hence they were intent on sharing with their suppliers "what the real consequences of not taking action are."

The Chief Executive of BFR referred to collaboration as the ideal route to changing companies, while acknowledging that is not always possible. Nonetheless, it is the CR advocate's job to point out that entanglements have always existed[2] and to use that to change how the market works by changing the qualities of market agents' entanglements and by exposing more of them not just between buyer, seller and product but between all the webs of connections that each of these three have—the Chinese manufacturers, the retailers in Cork, the product components from Peru, and the webs of all those involved along the supply chain, upstream and downstream.

But this exposure of entanglements demands a particular response and this chapter is about some of what was involved for companies in learning precisely what it entailed to be presented with such exposures. It required recognizing the value of entanglements in the first place and adjustments to how one operates as a market agent. Here, new transparencies seemed necessary in order to address the kinds of issues raised for company attention. These models of transparency for instance made certain kinds of information that circulated among smaller groups, now circulate among much wider groups. This was their appeal for companies as well as their danger, necessary as part of creating positive stakeholder relations even if those stakeholders were 5,000 miles away instead of right next door. In another way, this chapter is about what this model of transparency comprised as it developed.

For the sake of good example, and for practical reasons, BFR also encouraged transparencies between companies in the network as part of its teaching technique. As it recruited as members companies from among Ireland's top 300, it guided them—and explicitly, they *guided each other*—on *how* to become 'responsible' companies. BFR referred to its ensemble of companies as a 'network' or often, as a movement of companies. To some companies in the network a willingness to get involved seemed a primary trial of an ethos that companies should deploy all around them with whomever they were dealing—critics, suppliers, customers, neighbors or 'society'—all in order to achieve positive impact. The goal was that these companies would assess their policies and practices vis a vis these stakeholders, change them, measure the effects of change and importantly, report on or at least share know-how with other companies—be they competitors or otherwise—on all these activities. BFR organized specific 'sharing and learning' forums to facilitate just that.

But all the talk of collaboration did not mean that collaboration was the only thing changing, as if there was more collaboration at the expense of competition. Corporate responsibility models that wanted companies to collaborate more, simultaneously claimed (though proving this with certainty remains elusive – cf. Waddock and Graves 1997) that this would contribute to companies' bottom lines or to their competitiveness, thus encouraging them to angle for ongoing differentiation while collaborating.

There was a mixing of apparent antonyms in one place—competition, collaboration. From my vantage point, listening to how market relations were discussed and observing companies themselves struggle to understand where the lines were now to be drawn, it seemed that competition within the BFR network was intertwined with collaborative efforts to the extent that they were virtually indistinguishable—where, more accurately, both competition and collaboration seemed to be kinds of entanglement that served each other.

Clearly such possibilities jar with given ideas of competition. Consider Deutsch (1949) for example who, expressing the likelihood of a zero sum game, indicates that a competitive social situation is one in which a person's attainment of his or her goal prohibits or diminishes similar attainment by others (131-132). (It must be noted of course that according to neo-classical economics, such behavior—economic self-interest and instrumental rationality—is the source of *non*-zero or indeed positive sum gains to others – cf. Brennan and Moehler 2010, 4).

But a description like Deutsch's evokes a concept of singularity that is consistent with Weber's (1978) essay '*The market: Its impersonality and ethic'* which described "[t]he market community … [as] the most impersonal relationship of practical life into which humans can enter with one another. …Where the market is allowed to follow its own autonomous tendencies, its participants do not look toward the persons of each other but only toward the commodity; there are *no obligations of brotherliness or reverence, and none of those spontaneous human relations that are sustained by personal unions.* They all would just obstruct the free development of the bare market relationship, and its specific interests serve, in their turn, to weaken the sentiments on which these obstructions rest" (636, my emphasis).

Arguably that 'bare market relationship' was competition which Weber makes the defining feature of markets. He says: "A market may be said to exist wherever there is competition, even if only unilateral, for opportunities of exchange among a plurality of potential parties…" (635).

This idea of the alienation or 'disentanglement' (Callon 1998) operative in the market seems co-extensive with relations between companies too. As Uzzi (1997) notes,

> In the ideal-type atomistic market, exchange partners are linked by arm's-length ties. Self-interest motivates action, and actors regularly switch to new buyers and sellers to take advantage of new entrants or avoid dependence. The exchange itself is limited to price data, which supposedly distill all the information needed to make efficient decisions, especially when there are many buyers and sellers or transactions are nonspecific. Personal relationships are cool and atomistic; if ongoing ties or implicit contracts exist between parties, it is believed to be more a matter of self-interested, profit-seeking behavior than willful commitment or altruistic attachment (Macneil 1978). (36)

All of these descriptions emphasize as Uzzi puts it, the 'atomy' of market relations more than any kinds of durable and meaningful connection between market agents. All remain focused on the commodity. There are no spontaneous human relations sustained by personal unions. Rather market agents 'dicker' (Weber 1978, 636–637) to the extent that the best one can hope for is arms-length ties that can be readily abandoned as if they are of no value other than to commodity transactions.

My observations in this admittedly special domain of the BFR network were not consistent with the suggestion that even arms-length ties can be cut off totally. This is what Callon proposes when he discusses the workings of the market and as he sets out to question the origin of calculative agency upon which economic theories are predicated. He argues instead that agents are framed that way—that the model of the market espoused by economics is ‘performed’ or made material through normative processes of entanglement and disentanglement that frame how transactions should be understood. So on the one hand, market agents entangle one another as if luring one another into the transaction (promises of image transformation, happiness and so on) but at the conclusion of the transaction Callon, controversially in my view, asserts that they disentangle. Callon is at pains to emphasize disentanglement at the end of the transaction as the only way, as he insists on putting it repeatedly (even in later defenses of his position (Callon 2005)), that the protagonists to a transaction can “call it quits” (Callon 1998; 2005). It is as if Callon means to confirm the disentangled, calculative agent that economic theories depend on, as if that is the heart of what we are to understand by the ethos of the market and more importantly, as if such agonistic relations are the crux of the workings of the market.

In contrast, I mean to emphasize a perspective among CR managers that already intuited and was beginning to draw on a certain durability of relations even between those that operated in the same market segment (i.e. competitors) and even between those who continued to perceive their position as that prescribed for competitors above. Even between these there was a durability of relations that I consider ‘oblique’ entanglement. Consider competitors who, while professing their competitiveness, were closely watching their peers, adjusting their actions accordingly, mimicking one another or trying to outdo them with ‘leadership’ goals and actions. Their games of tag provided one another with direction and meaning and one was left with an impression of more or less unified action however little it was referred to or recognized as such.

Indeed, what comes through in the data—to use Callon’s thesis—is how my interlocutors were realizing that they *had* been framed to think of themselves as disentangled market agents and as they experimented with new ways of relating, the pliability of that frame as a normative construct was clear. For example, at the UK conference I mentioned earlier, following the appeal from Glaxo Smithkline for companies to collaborate, at the questions and answers the executive reiterated that “when you realize you can’t make the impact that you would like alone then it’s the best of times to throw away some of the *taboos* and actually think about where can we go with our fiercest competitor ...it’s *throwing away the old mindset* of well you don’t talk to certain people. Actually very often you need to embrace the most unlikely collaborators to work together with” (my emphasis). While “the most unlikely collaborators” might also be previously antagonistic NGOs, this speaker explicitly identified their “fiercest competitor” as a potential collaborator. Hence, in keeping with how some CR managers were coming to regard that given use of ‘competition’ as a kind of fiction, that is the sense in which I also use the term.

This perspective is much closer to how Schumpeter (1987) emphasizes the prevalence of imperfect competition or to how Durkheim (1997) talks of organic solidarity – how it “unites at the same time as it sets at odds... The individuals between whom the conflict is joined must already be solidly linked to one another and feel so, that is, they belong to the same society” (217).

Specifically in relation to the kind of atomy or disentanglement that Callon and others would prioritize in market operations, Durkheim notes “even where society rests wholly upon the division of labour, it does not resolve itself into a myriad of atoms juxtaposed together, between which only external and transitory contact can be established. The members are linked by ties that extend well beyond the very brief moment when the act of exchange is being accomplished. Each one of the functions that the members exercise is constantly dependent upon others and constitutes with them a solidly linked system" (173).

Durkheim is careful to note that joining or solid links does not mean mixing; the division of labor "leaves them distinct, and in competition with one another" (160) which in turn necessitates a "compromise, one that steers a middle course between the interests that are in competition and their solidarity with one another" (160). That is because "[i]nstead of entering into competition, or remaining so, two similar undertakings find their equilibrium again by sharing their common task: instead of one becoming subordinate to the other, they co-ordinate their activities. But in every case new specialities appear" (212).

The coordination that Durkheim mentions is clear even when considering 'oblique entanglement' between competitors. Using and perhaps supplementing Durkheim's description of organic solidarity, any kind of solidarity involves the interplay of what he calls negative and positive solidarity the former most recognizable by abstention, or the fact that it contributes nothing to uniting the different parts, the latter contributing to uniting the different parts. In that sense oblique entanglement may look like negative solidarity, not contributing anything to unity because it is an abstention—but it is an abstention from overt cooperation specifically (thanks to anti-trust law), a collective abstention, or everyone's faithfulness to a game that keeps competition viable for everyone. In a Durkheimian frame, it is, if you like, cooperation driven underground, hence emphasizing the layers that marketplace competition has.

This chapter is about the compromising that Durkheim mentions, the steering of a middle course, the co-ordination of activities to find new ways of getting *out* of competition, so that each company was different—just as they figured out *what* they were competing for. When it came to corporate responsibility, arguably the tools didn't exist yet to identify what exactly the competitors were vying for or how well they were vying for it. The experiments of collaboration / competition between these competitors in collaboration would construct just that.

Furthermore and perhaps most significant of all to the difference of this domain, the negotiation of collaboration and competition between competitors in relation to subject matter that explicitly *wants* companies to collaborate more and to be more transparent put companies under an unusual pressure and made the situation even more messy[3]. Those that took the risks recognized that they could easily become more transparent in new ways such that transparency itself became the object of competition or of differentiation. In the CR ideal, the best competitors at transparency were contenders for being the most responsible of all but being the best at transparency paradoxically also seemed to mean that competitors had to show or share with others how they too could be transparent. By these companies' telling, one could recognize by how well they collaborated in the primary CR learning network whether a company had truly embraced corporate responsibility and its essential trait of transparency.

In one way I am mistaken to talk only in terms of 'companies.' It was not companies who were negotiating these changes but people who were just as much company representatives as they were human beings. Thus I also mean to emphasize how it is the actions of people even in bureaucracies— their passions, indignations and low points—that were part of what was making change happen despite Weber's diagnosis (1958).

It was precisely the interactions between CR managers that brought my attention to the interplay between collaboration and competition. Despite all the talk of collaboration, from time to time much to my surprise, collaboration didn't work so smoothly. Often it seemed like the company representatives were behaving like competitors. For instance, some wouldn't share so much at the network meetings which were organized by BFR executives with the purpose that companies *would* learn from each other while others felt permitted in the circumstances to reveal a great deal. One interlocutor that I call Frankie, a CR executive, said: "...[W]hen we all get together in the same room, I [say] we shouldn't be naïve about this that we're competitors so when I'm sharing information I'm going to share it but I'm going to be understanding that it's competitive, competitive information so as long as the sharing works both ways fine but I just find it a bit tricky sometimes. I find it a bit tricky."

Though Frankie would have preferred a reciprocal gift from her competitors she shared anyway. What was it that allowed Frankie to share? What follows dwells a great deal on what Frankie had to say as well as another CR executive that I call Freda. I have chosen them primarily *because* they had a lot to say about these issues and Frankie in particular, as we will see, was beginning to formulate a ranking based on companies' embrace of CR according to how well they shared. Implicit and sometimes explicit in her frustration with other companies was that they were "not doing it right' while she was, placing her as a leader in CR. Indeed, her own estimation of her efforts, was consistent with how I heard various CR advocates and other CR managers refer to her and her company and to Freda's. The remainder of the chapter will explore what 'doing it right" was coming to mean.

As I probed what allowed sharing in the CR network with my interlocutors they spoke in more and less explicit terms of several factors at work within the catalyzing context prepared by BFR. An ability to collaborate with or to explore or draw on the companies around them was an outflow of at least three complementary factors, which I will describe sequentially for the remainder of the paper but as will be evident, they are interlinked, and should be in no particular order. Threading through each of them are more *and* less explicit collaborations or entanglements with other companies.

They were companies which were first and most importantly, demonstrating that they were *doing* CR. Secondly they were aided by a CR manager of a particular type. Finally, throughout, though discussed explicitly in conclusion, they were influenced by the presence and activities of other companies to do CR and to excel at it. Discussing these three points shows the work companies were undertaking to explore transparencies and to make themselves perform while involving special personnel and the support of their competitors as they made these changes—and all to become more competitive.

Underlying much of the first part of my description—demonstrating that companies are 'doing CR,'--was a certain performance anxiety to actually 'walk the talk' that acted as a motive force for companies in first of all coming to terms with what the company was trying to achieve and adopting stances open to relating. By performance I am drawing attention to their effort to make certain models of how companies *should* be, material to prove that they have embraced the models and their promise.

However, as we will see, there was no fixed recipe for properly performing openness. Frankie asserted a recipe of culture and values that prove each other as well as proving openness. The irony is that in implementing the model espoused by CR advocates, Frankie was also changing it slightly. The further irony is that despite the exploration of this new ground—'new' being new ways of relating, new plays on the model put before her—one cannot help the feeling, perfectly consistent with the idea of entanglements, that companies were roping themselves into ever tighter knots of stakeholder expectations and demands.

Before proceeding there are a number of theoretical touch points to mention. Throughout this chapter the interplay between companies and the influence on companies that CR advocates had, resonates with DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) explanation of similarity between institutions. The authors attribute this to organizations' "structuration" (Giddens 1979) in an "organizational field" (Di Maggio and Powell, 1983, 148) where "connectedness" or "the existence of transactions tying organizations to one another" (ibid) as well as "structural equivalence" facilitate three mechanisms of isomorphic institutional change which I will discuss shortly: coercive; mimetic and normative.

One might consider the emerging world of CSR in Ireland as just such an organizational field and Frankie as one vector among many who is helping to structure it through the kinds of stages that DiMaggio (1982) lists—namely: increased interaction, "the emergence of... structures of domination and patterns of coalition; an increase in the information load...: and the development of a mutual awareness among participants in a set of organizations that they are involved in a common enterprise (DiMaggio 1982)" (ibid).

Essentially, drawing on Schelling (1978, 14), DiMaggio and Powell suggest that “organizations... respond to an environment that consists of other organizations responding to their environment, which consists of organizations responding to an environment of organizations’ responses” (149). DiMaggio and Powell identify the entire process with isomorphism, a phrase borrowed from human ecologist, Hawley (1968) to describe “a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions” (149). It is about organizations learning to adjust to conditions as opposed to being ‘selected *out’* of a population of organizations.

Coercive change results from pressures exerted by other organizations on which the first is dependent (such as customers, legal rules or standards) and by cultural expectations. Mimetic change derives from uncertainty which encourages imitation or what the authors call ‘modeling’ where an organization “merely serves as a convenient source of practices that the borrowing organization may use. Models may be diffused unintentionally, indirectly through employee transfer or turnover, or explicitly by organizations such as consulting firms or industry trade associations” (151). As CSR ‘best-practice’ was unclear to many and yet was discussed and made-in-practice by others such as BFR and by self-styled companies such as Frankie’s, they inadvertently provided a model for change as we shall see. Lastly, normative pressures issue primarily from professionalization which the authors describe “as the collective struggle of members of an occupation to define the conditions and methods of their work” (152). Professionals will have much in common with their counterparts in other organizations and this is also true of the CSR professionals in this chapter as we will also see.

This chapter supplements that paper with an insight to the intricacies and the extensive intermingling of all of the factors (e.g. regulatory, uncertainty, modeling, professionalization) that the authors distil into ‘coercive’, ‘mimetic’ and ‘normative’ headings. This chapter also relates the factors in different ways—connecting regulatory pressures (coercion) to uncertainty and modeling (mimesis) and to professionalization (normative) so that their separate actions are hard to distinguish. It also highlights how change can develop from homogeneity where mimics in turn become leaders in the right environmental circumstances.

Cyert and March’s (1992) idea of “organizational slack” where an organization responds to environmental uncertainty by creating more capacity than is needed (think of ‘latency’ discussed in Chapter 2), further nuances the idea of organizational change and provides somewhere to locate these CR managers and their openness to collaboration (42-43) or to searching for solutions to their problems (if they have reached a point where they have been framed as problems).

This chapter will also supplement DiMaggio and Powell’s factors with others at the level of the personal (anxiety, loneliness); of imagination (of the future, of reputation, of networks, of stakeholders) and of the discursive where CR specifically becomes subject to politics at the convergence of histories and geographies. One might say that the chapter complements the formalist tendencies in the literature on the new institutionalism (cf. commentary by Hann in Benson and Kirsch 2010, 476). In respect to responding to the environment as mentioned above, Axelrod and Hamilton’s (1981) paper on the ‘evolution of cooperation’ comes into its own. This is where the authors describe in ecological or game theoretic terms the likelihood of cooperation or reciprocity (their so called ‘tit for tat’ model) where players are likely to interact again and where there are a variety of other strategies open to each.

At a more abstract level, Frankie's and others' anxiety to perform an 'open company' and the risks that Frankie was taking in extending the information she made available to those nominal competitors also signaled an effort to extend systemic trust (Luhmann 1979) among companies and correspondingly, to redistribute distrust.

Trust is a systemic mechanism that serves to reduce environmental complexity where there are more possibilities than can be realized. Trust is to risk defining what is actually an uncertain future and entailing dependence on another. Paraphrasing Luhmann, Lane & Bachmann (2000) note: "Expectations about another's trustworthiness only become relevant when the completion of one's own consequential activities *depend* on the prior action or co-operation of another person" (3). To trust is a risk because it bridges a situation where the potential losses from trusting are greater than the potential benefit of having one's trust proven right. In other words without the benefits of full information or of the passage of time, trust is required but it "exposes the agent to the presumed opportunistic behaviour of her business partner" (3). Nonetheless, there is an accompanying expectation in trust that one's vulnerability won't be taken advantage of and in these more and less explicit ways, the burdens of dealing with complexity are shared.

Distrust serves a similar complexity reduction function to trust but its particular difference is that it is built on negative expectations of others meaning that the distrusting subject retains for his or her own handling a greater proportion of environmental complexity. It is harder work.

Arguably what some of my interlocutors were becoming invested in and what they were trying to initiate in response to many vectors, was a downplaying of distrust among companies in favor of trust as it pertained to the matters that have become grouped under the banner of CR. Born out of shocking events—the ‘discovery’ of sweatshops and of environmental destruction—CR represents an expectation of discontinuity or all the possible future events that could occur so that no matter how well companies plan their futures today, they also know that the future, tomorrow, and the tomorrows it generates, could well yield surprises.

CR is a way of trawling as widely as possible in the present for futures – drawing in wider circles of trust, enlisting communities, environmental representatives, human rights representatives, even other companies—all the possible sources of uncertainty (they have been hitherto) into regarding the future. In being shown the impossibility of predicting the future the best attempts at assurances about corporate behavior might be sufficient to stabilize critique as long as such assurances and impossibilities keep coming. In such circumstances, mastery does not increase but trust must.

In the idiom of trust, one can interpret the often criticized (cf. Welker 2009) mantra of keeping CR strictly voluntary for companies. The idea of introducing legal requirements to enforce CR is eschewed and existing laws are instead situated as a minimum threshold for responsible companies. To the CR experts, to be truly responsible is to go ‘beyond compliance’, an old theme of the business school literature (cf. Carroll 1991). Hence law and responsibility are compatible but the trust being mobilized by corporate responsibility agents signals that the trust upon which contract law is built is not comprehensive enough and that it probably never will be. The predominant thought is that there can never be a rule to ensure social and moral probity for every possibility that emerges from corporate action. It is a focus on principles rather than rule-based governance that one senior civil servant told me was currently a hot debate in policy circles also. In relation to CR specifically, the construction of new relations of trust that make trust between companies an explicit goal, is to trust in trust as regulator. It is to add a complementary trust system and to attempt to make actions and outcomes more predictable while nonetheless making the environment even more complex.

Furthermore, I suggest that the oblique entanglements (or the distrustful but nonetheless collaborative relations) among companies as well as the organized, interdependent structure within companies themselves, provide a basis where trust (or outright collaborative competition) in relation to CR is easier to achieve. Luhmann (1979) described such situations where:

> interdependencies already exist and can be presumed to be known, when the participants are both living in a system which is familiar to both, and so requires no further information about it but tacitly provides an everyday basis for mutual understanding. In such circumstances the participants know that they are about to encounter one another again, and that they are bound to become dependent on one another in situations which cannot be exactly foreseeable, and which sometimes favour one of them, and sometimes the other. They also know, each of them, that his partner assesses the situation in those terms. Trust relationships find a favourable soil in social contexts with the same kind of structure, i.e. are characterised by the relative persistence of the relationship, by reciprocal dependences, and a certain quality of the unforeseen. The overriding consideration is that one is going to meet again. The participants will have to go on seeing each other. This makes it more difficult for trust to be breached, at any rate when any breach could not be hidden from the partner or acceptable excuses offered. It appears, therefore, that social systems which are thrown upon mutual trust to an exceptional extent, by the very structure of their internal interdependencies, at the same time also generate more favourable conditions for the emergence of trust. That is, possibilities of sanction produce a generalizing effect in the context not only of hierarchical relations, but also of those between equals. They stabilize interaction through the anticipation of extreme contingencies" (37).

As we proceed this basis underlies all the slow moves that are required towards downplaying or making tolerable the risks of sharing information with competitors and kick-starting a system dynamic of trust that will be intrinsic to the success of CR. The discussion is about what companies do when confronted by the risk of trusting – and when taken, the internal learning involved and the symbolic resolution of themselves as corporate 'personalities' worthy of and distributing trust.

Doing CR

What does "doing CR' have to do with being more open, more collaboratively disposed or more willing to open one's self to entanglements? Frankie argued for a clear connection. Doing CR properly was linked in depth to making more information more available.

As she discussed her interactions with other companies in the BFR network, it was clear how even as she referenced their inability to share, their distrustfulness, their actions were obliquely of assistance to her own assessment of her own company's position. Different levels of an ability to share were apparent and she had a diagnosis of the problem. "I've had some communications with [other organizations] and I'd be talking about what we do and why we do it and our CR activities and the comment I got was 'Wow you're very open about all of this,' and I said 'Why shouldn't I be?' and immediately it said to me 'Ah there's something there for that organization because maybe they *don't see this as the way of doing things,'* and it's amazing how cultures become expressed in short conversations" (my emphasis).

The companies who had a different level of openness, who "don't see this as the way of doing things", was something that she attributed to culture. She went on to say that simply attending BFR network activities was not the key but changing culture—that way of doing things—was.

> I would argue with the best will in the world, I don't think BFR will override the organization's position on disclosure ... so you can have 30 people in a room with different organisations and you can say 'Now what do we do about this?' and some organisations will be more open than others. Some organisations will continue to put the best foot forward because that is their culture and you won't get [others] to change that. You won't get them to say 'Oh well actually we did something there and it wasn't quite right,' because they'll fear they'll be in the newspapers tomorrow because they manage things from a media perspective. It's fascinating and I wouldn't have realized honestly what an issue it is for organisations... That's been a major learning for me over the past [few] years is what an issue it is for some organizations to talk about anything outside ... and that's where they struggle with CR.

The way of doing things, or the ideal company culture that Frankie had in mind was one that as she said "puts the best foot forward"--was one that was able to admit shortcomings, that something "wasn't quite right." Companies who couldn't say that would also struggle with CR she asserted.

Frankie made the link between company culture and achieving excellence at CR clearer when she talked about the creation of a CR report. As another interlocutor described it, the CR report is a shockingly 'honest' document where companies lay out their CR targets for the coming year and how they have met or indeed failed their targets for the past year. In the world of CR advisors, it is best practice for a company to produce a CR report. A CR report is considered a demonstration of transparency and openness about company activities. It is the kind of company that stakeholders will be more willing to be involved with.

However, despite the prize, producing such a report is not easy. Done well, the report covers the entirety of a company's CR endeavors – how for instance it handles corporate governance and how it relates to employees, to its local neighbors, to ethical trading practices and to the physical environment. The process of finding out and publishing all of the details of these activities in terms of policies, practices and performance requires lots of work on the part of the CR manager. It also requires the internal cooperation of many heads of function and perhaps new measurement techniques (see Chapter 1) and processes—in other words company investment—to capture all the required data.

> It's a real challenge to do it, it's a real challenge to do it and in some respects, I wouldn't say this to, it's almost the easiest part is actually writing it. The most difficult part is actually making sure everybody is bought in so you get the material and if people aren't bought in, it's a much more daunting prospect so you have to have buy-in and if you haven't got it, you're just going to fail and that's where I think organizations, that failure of nerve almost. Can we actually do this and sustain it? It's a whole sustainability issue. Can we actually sustain it?… [S]ome people come along and say "Jeez, that's tough," and it is and actually making that commitment is a real commitment but that's part of the process of CR as well – making a commitment to actually do something like that and that's where some of the companies just have the failure of nerve.

For Frankie, producing a CR report was a key test of companies' openness and first and foremost she meant openness with themselves. (The importance of the notion of a 'test' that's implicit here is something that I'll come back to.) This became clear when Frankie discussed her CR report with others and it says something about the extent of the embrace by organizations of the given understanding of competition—supported of course by anti-trust law—and subsequently the leap that an organization must make to consider these new entanglements that CR exposes and proposes. Companies said such reporting is not for them because of the "attitude in their organisation.... people saying well why would we put that in a report." This was no surprise to Frankie: "I would have got that in the past and then I just do it and people say 'Oh the house didn't fall down. We weren't on Prime Time [the Irish investigative current affairs program] for somebody publishing our CR report.' I just told people what we were doing. Some organizations can't do that, they really can't do it and ... the point being that no matter what the forum is if you get all those [member companies of the BFR network] into a room they still can't do it. They still have, they'll still be thinking in terms of the culture."

In contrast to those in the network that she's critical of, when Frankie wanted to declare more information in her own organization, she was resisted but she didn't think in terms of the culture. She took a leap of faith, took a risk to change her company's attitude to its own information—effectively to change the culture—and it paid off. By publishing a CR report not only did she change the attitude internally, prove her own trustworthiness *and* publish the information but by doing so she feels she exposed that corporate 'way of doing things' as one that is willing to engage. "[The CR report] helps to define the organisation so the very fact of us producing a CR report – you're exposing your culture. Now I know [other companies] might do a few paragraphs in their annual report but it does nothing to put the cultural identity that a full report like that gives you. That's an identity report. I mean that positions us very definitely as a particular type of organization and I would hope that somebody picking that up—it's like a corporate brochure—would pick it up and say 'Oh yeah, pretty good feel for what that organization is like.'"

It was a remark others made about the CR report. In one case when their first edition appeared, many employees' responses were that they had no idea that the company did all of these things or was addressing all of these concerns. Usually the CR manager reported this feedback with pride and a smile. The entanglements proliferate even internally, as if they are being exposed.

What Frankie was arguing was that being more open was not so much about being a renegade *outside* and breaking company protocol but about leading an internal change first—that seeking information about gender distribution, energy use or trading practices must be accompanied by a particular commitment to handling the information—putting the best foot forward, being able to admit something "wasn't quite right" and making the company develop plans to deal with that and to communicate it with self-assurance. In the CR world, this indicated a company that was really intent on engaging with stakeholders, being in dialogue with them which is seen as a prelude and an effect of changing policies, practices and measurements across all operations in line with the aims of corporate responsibility. This was more in keeping with actually 'doing' corporate responsibility and effectively being more trustworthy.

As another interlocutor put it, not responding well to sharing opportunities was not necessarily about companies setting out *not* to share with competitors but first and foremost, about companies needing to go through the process of deciding what can be spoken about to *anyone* – how they might respond, that they can respond, how they should change and proving it to themselves that "the house didn't fall down." Another CR manager that I call Freda represented her company's attitude to information this way:

> Basically for me, anything that my company is happy to have in the public domain I'm happy to share and would be proactive in sharing. So for example if ...I was making a presentation about the initiative in an environment or a milieu that included our competitors I'd be quite happy to share the presentation because I'd know that in order to have got to the point where the presentation was being made at all it's okay for us within the company's own assessment of what's highly confidential or privileged information. That's already been cleared so I wouldn't ever talk publicly or present publicly about an issue that was company sensitive no matter if it was in BFR or otherwise.

So transparency or sharing did not mean 'reveal all' but a clear attention to and management of information and interestingly, her competitors helped her to define new limits on what was to be shared or not. One must also be attentive to the sense of comfort emanating from knowing one's information boundaries whether that is an outcome of simply having had the internal discussion or whether that emanates from a CR report, which is likely to be as comprehensive as a company will get. Describing details of new dimensions of business action as well as the company 'warts' is to push against the limits of what a company will disclose but in the safest possible way – i.e. through internal consultation. In many dimensions the CR report captures and solidifies a company's limits on information. In this way, it is both a risky venture but also a risk controlling device. It is to rise to a new communicative system linked to trust and with its own checks and balances.

While Frankie put a lot of stock in the declarative value of the CR report, Freda also demonstrated her position on information but without publishing a report. Her alternative approach was to be more open with competitors who were BFR colleagues, even *outside* explicit BFR fora, having been introduced there.

> Personally I've had a number of meetings with my counterpart in [company A] and in [company B] where we'd openly discuss our approach to different issues as [our kinds of organizations]... Myself and [the CR Manager at Company B] at various stages have talked about education and the role [our kinds of organizations] can play and we've talked about whether there would be opportunities for us to forge partnerships together in trying to achieve something, in other words that our joint organizations would there be some merit in linking as [our kinds of organizations] to try and do something so that would be quite open. We also openly shared information about our environment programmes.

She emphasized that not having a report was: "...nothing to do with hiding from competitors... It's more logistics around, are people interested, have you a framework set up for sending out these reports when they come in, etc etc."

But changing one's approach to information within the framework of corporate responsibility does not just spontaneously emerge. Organizations' environments were changing in a multitude of ways so that by one route or another, companies were arriving at a realization that these changes were in the air.

Each was trying to figure out exactly what these pressures to change were and what, if anything, to do about them. BFR catalyzed, crystallized, and articulated that environment and the required remedies. So did competitors like Frankie and Freda. Slowly, many companies were changing tack. For instance, an organization with heavy manufacturing realized that they were handing valuable information to competitors in their CR report but in the end, they published anyway, deciding not to care if a rival took out a calculator and figured out its margins. Their decision suggested an awareness of a model of competitiveness (that also involved an awareness of their competitors) but then, a decision that that model of competitiveness had somehow been superseded where the risk of publishing information had somehow been made more tolerable by a pay-off elsewhere.

Luhmann (1979, 61) identifies the adaptive power that trusting and trusted entities have with respect to their environment. One can thus speculate on the benefits to the company of taking a stand on its own information as an advance on trustworthy relationships with those who have a great deal of control over its future. As Freda noted, the pressure to change was to do with "a combination of a number of things – it's increased demand for transparency from the government and regulators around alot of issues suddenly putting pressure on [these organizations] to be more open and within their own organizations themselves, there's a changing culture and more a realization of the value of openness and transparency."

Among those leading a hard-to-ignore desire for transparency were rating agencies and investor groups typically based in London and New York. The Investor Relations Director of one multinational that I interviewed referred to their CR report as "cost of entry" these days—meaning it had become one of the conditions on which investment houses would talk to the company during their financial results road shows. She recounted a trend of investor meetings where she would meet two people and often there would be a third person in the room who may or may not be introduced and when they were, they often turned out to be from the sustainability research area that she believed alot of these investment houses now had. There used to be one or two questions specifically about the report and she would never go to an investor meeting without a report in her bag. (Another CR manager advised that this was why she physically printed some too - because her chairman liked to be able to demonstrate that they had one at the annual shareholder meeting in response to questions.) But now the Investor Relations Director had the impression that the analysts wanted to stay at arms length, to just work on the public data in the report and not be swayed by a response she might give to one of their direct questions. Hence in this case, interpreting her, the distrust now focused on her while the company CR report was more trustworthy.

Echoing the power disadvantage evident in this account, Frankie put the results of producing a CR report, and being rated on it by investment houses or by CR report rating agencies, in these terms:

> F: We have now moved into their frame of reference because of what we're doing and by moving into their frame of reference, they're giving us ratings… and once you get a rating well then that becomes a…
> E: You're a hostage to it...
> F: You're a hostage to it yeah. You get a rating and then somebody says well is the rating going up or going down or is it staying the same and I've had this discussion with [another company] so it becomes a process then to actually hold your rating or improve your rating and that's where you get recognition as well.

To put it in terms of the language of trust, the sometimes vague and sometimes pointed demands for companies to change from entities one distrusts (and thus relieved of moral obligation (Luhmann 1979, 74)) to being trustworthy meant that the expectations of others – rating agencies and other so-called stakeholders - must now be built into companies' self-presentations.

> The basis of all trust is the presentation of the individual self as a social identity which builds itself up through interaction and which corresponds to its environment. Whoever presents himself from the outset as unapproachable—and this can be done in many different ways: …whoever distances himself in this way is in no position to acquire trust because he offers no opportunities for learning and testing. He may demonstrate that he is a relatively calculable factor in the situation; but he is not trusted. Whoever wants to win trust must take part in social life and be in a position to build the expectations of others into his own self-presentation. This is the basic rule. It must not, however, be confused with mere conformity – anything but! We have already seen that role-conformity offers little opportunity for the presentation of self. Anyone who merely conforms will not be seen as self at all, and therefore can be trusted as little as the person who hurries past. The path to trust is by way of entering into the expectations of others in a very general, loose, way: one can fulfill them better than expected, or in a different way. Where indifference was expected, a certain outgoing quality can convince, provided it is not overdone… All self-presentation entails obligation – for the simple reason that it presents a self to which claim as identify is laid. If one wants to remain the same, one must remain what one has shown oneself to be. In specific respects it may be possible to find good reasons for a discrepancy or so to reinterpret one's past self-presentation….The actor in his self-presentation shows himself as interested in trust, as seeking to win trust. As this interest becomes obvious, and manipulation of the presentation transparent, the truster can rest his trust on it and control the behavior of the actor by means of his interest, by signaling to him the conditions for the continuation of [sic] withdrawal of trust" (Luhmann 1979, 62-63).

The production of information and all the pressures and expectations it entailed from various onlookers was a social mechanism, a mechanism of entanglement, to be counted on as a discipline on companies, but one that companies themselves could find a certain comfort in if they could bring themselves to trust it and to symbolically resolve that trust. Speaking about a report by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on business and human rights, Professor John Ruggie, (2008) who was seeking to ensure that the changes espoused by CR have positive effects on the most disadvantaged, I told Frankie about a dimension of the report (not entirely accurately) to do with regulating CR or not.

> E: NGOs around the world have been waiting for what he was going to say and he's encouraging reporting. He said don't regulate for [corporate responsibility because addressing human rights issues is outside the scope of individual rules] but companies need to do it.
> F: I'm with him 100%.
> E: and he just says by that simple thing of making companies report, it just kicks off this whole chain reaction of other stuff [especially changing corporate culture]
> F: absolutely, it absolutely does. It's like the rating agencies argument you know. Once you report, it's like, you're not going to stop reporting now are you? Well you're not.

Other elements of the environment in which the company sits were also operative as forces for change. Frankie notes:

> What strikes me about the current environment is that there is a shift taking place and if there was … any time for CR to come to the fore, now is the time... because of everything that's happened in business over the last two years and all of the stuff coming out about practices particularly in banks and that – ... if there was ever an opportunity to have a fundamental shift, now is the time –say well guys, maybe you should look at CR – not just as an add-on but what are you actually doing. I mean there's an opportunity there – not least because public and customers won't accept the previous standards anymore.

While there is some doubt in the literature (cf. Schuler and Christmann 2011) as to consumer willingness to pay more for 'responsible' goods and services, the BFR collaborative competitors were increasingly responsive to pressures—'real' and perceived—in their environments.

In keeping with that a recent addition and critique of the co-opetition[4] literature (Baumard 2010) suggests that the models, tactics and theories of co-opetition do not approach the complexity of what is actually going on. Baumard suggests that co-opetative strategies have reached such a stage of complexity that it is difficult to now locate strategy making within firms as if separate to their environment and their competitors (see also Chapter 3). He attributes this to co-opetative environments—"the economic, social or technological arenas where competition and cooperation are mutually conditional to each other, i.e. where competition between two or several firms cannot be achieved or maintained with[out] a minimal amount of simultaneous cooperation and vice versa, where cooperative attempts will trigger competitive tensions (Bengtsson and Kock 2000; Brandenburger and Nalebuff 1997)" (7). Radically, he proposes that given the complexity and the imbrications between companies, strategy should be approached as a product of companies' environments.

But how does one respond to all of these forces? For these companies, threaded throughout this discussion—from the 'test' that Frankie saw the CR report as embodying, to Freda's less material but nonetheless obvious sharing practices—was an anxiety about performance. In other words, it was not enough to be in a room of responsible companies to also be one. One had to show form, to demonstrate responsibility—here achieved through a norm of transparency on thoughts and intentions (policy) followed through to actions (practices and measurements of performance in those policies and practices)—all of which was best embodied in the CR report according to Frankie.

Frankie's anxiety about performance is consistent with an increasing turn in advanced liberalism to what Dean (2009) refers to as technologies of performance (193) or with what Lyotard (1984) emphasizes as the condition of performativity where contemporary evaluations increasingly demand metrics and outputs. He describes these features in the realms of education. Performativity is to do with the idea and the mechanisms of making models real, making them material or enacting them. Callon (1998; 2005) and Miller (2002; 2005) discuss this in relation to the dialectic between models of the economy and how the economy actually functions and indeed changes the model. To delve into the mechanics of these changes it is worth referring here to the concept of performativity as developed by Butler (1993) but as also discussed in a useful synthesis of Foucault, Lyotard and Austin by Marshall (1999).

In keeping with Butler it is important to emphasize that performance here does not mean a presentation or a theatrical façade in relation to CR. Indeed, that is exactly what Frankie was trying to avoid. It came through in particular when she talked about often-espoused corporate values. For her, values were closely connected to corporate culture—values being principles for action that she said "drive the organisation," or elsewhere that "give people a framework… [E]very single department … was asked to define what those values would mean for them in terms of things they would do – not a philosophical question but what are you actually going to do or what are you doing and anything that they were doing that wasn't fitting with the values, cut it off… It's very time consuming but it was, it's the only way to do it so you have to get down to each individual in the organisation."

Importantly, what you don't want is values and culture that don't complement each other or worse still, a mismatch between values described and values enacted. For example, Frankie said,

> It's all very well having say openness in your values but if you've got openness in your values and you're not willing to disclose information about the organization, what does that mean? A straight contradiction and that's where the conflict comes in I think. So you've got your espoused values and your real values but when you produce something like this [CR report], there's no escape from your real values. By God I mean it's right down there [laughing]. If we're not doing that it's going to be very bloody obvious. That's the point so the point about culture is important because it helps to define the culture.

Interestingly, the values she had in mind, the kinds that *can* complement a corporate culture, were very particular. Too often, she said companies espouse philosophical values like honesty, respect and fairness. In Frankie's opinion, "if business is being honest business well actually say ‘we’re pursuing the business agenda’. We want to do it in a responsible way. But for somebody to come along and to say... ‘What are our values? Honesty, respect and fairness’. Wow, you know, it’s like going to church. I mean if you said that to somebody outside – they’d say ‘Oh no. Please. It’s business.’ If I say [our values are to be a] great place to work and team of achievers – you’ll say, ‘Oh yeah, that connects.’ But they’re business values.”

That’s not to say that philosophical values weren’t present. If anything they were assumed. But her issue with companies that made them their values was that philosophical values like honesty “shouldn’t be an espoused value that people aspire to. It should be a base requirement. I’m raising it to a higher level. I’m saying well let’s not put down honesty as a value and say ‘Well did we live by our value of honesty?’ Forget that. .... So like it’s a requirement to actually be in the organization. It’s not something you aspire to... If somebody is dishonest, they’re out of the organization so whether you have honesty as a core value or not shouldn’t stop you addressing an issue where somebody’s dishonest. So having it as a core value doesn’t make any difference.”

Indeed she added that instead, “if you have a core value of pursuing customer satisfaction there’s a better chance you won’t overcharge your customers than if you’ve got honesty as a core value... [T]here are many companies just have, I mean I believe there are many companies who just have values because you have to have values you know. They don’t mean anything in practice.”

For Frankie, values were statements of what is important to the organization but akin to Austin’s (1967; 1970) idea of performative language, particularly what he calls perlocutionary language, Frankie seemed to pin a great deal on the right kinds of values as if naming them should also achieve something else; I suggest that naming the right kinds of values was part of her effort to materialize her corporate culture as one that has embraced the regulative ideal of CR.

Austin's essential condition for recognizing perlocutionary language is that it should refuse any true or false claims. Marshall uses this idea to explain the authoritative force of discourse identified by Foucault (1974), the ability to make a subject into something specifically by judging, asserting or categorizing it as such. Being closed off to true or false claims, according to Marshall (given the right circumstances) is one of two crucial sources of the power of perlocutionary language to make a thing into what it is named. But in my view Marshall misses a point that threaded through Frankie's anxiety and that Butler does suggest—consistency.

Remember that Frankie was a little indignant above when she noted the contradiction in other companies that for example claimed a value of openness and then wouldn't disclose information about the organization. This *inconsistency* between the utterances and the actions that Frankie identified in other companies, opened those utterances to being false—hence they lost their perlocutionary effect, their ability to convince (the other of Austin's criteria) that the companies actually *were* being more transparent or were 'doing CR'.

In the same way, going back to Frankie's starting comment about the 'trickiness' of sharing in the network, it seems inconsistent to talk the talk of transparency—so essential to the ideal of CR—and even publish a CR report but not share in the network. Becoming a truly responsible company, in the way that responsibility is practiced around marketplace relations, necessitates a changed company—one demonstrably open to transparency and if this is to be believable, one open to other kinds of relations, consistently. And it's no secret that the inability of CR to convince as a philosophy of real change is rampant as if the inconsistencies of companies consistently make companies inconsistent.

On the contrary, by pursuing consistency, by Frankie's stated values being what a business might do (e.g. customer satisfaction), the utterances about these values could be true. Furthermore, Frankie provided data on the company's performance on such values in the CR report. The statements and the actions collaborated to perform truth about the importance of customer satisfaction to the company as well performing openness without ever mentioning either. This report was no mere exposure or 'window' on the company as Frankie portrayed it. That it was portrayed as a 'window' was itself part of the performance of transparency and consistency helps to make these elements of the ideal of CR, 'normal'.

Hence I suggest that the force of perlocutionary language is never to do with naming alone, as if to magically convert something from one thing into something completely different for which there is no precedent. Previous experience has to have prepared someone or something for the possibility of being that kind of thing. However this part for experience in judging knowledge, as well as parallel inconsistencies in relation to other aspects of companies' activities, means that despite present approximate consistencies, the possibility of inconsistency is also always there.

Butler captures the 'inconsistency' of consistency well in her discussion of performativity as it relates to sex. Performance is "the ritualized repetition by which such norms produce and stabilize not only the effects of gender but the materiality of sex" (x).

While Butler uses the word ‘repetition’ as if to emphasize reproduction of the same acts, I wish to allow for the production and reproduction of acts understood as agglomerations of actions, language (written or spoken), imagery and more that all converge approximately to reiterate an idea. One might see Frankie’s efforts, thinking, and indignations as a signal of her figuring out her own interpretation of the consistencies that could count as ‘ritualized repetition’ for companies trying to materialize the ‘regulative ideal’ (Foucault) of CR in their company cultures.

This gets to a further relevant point of Butler’s in relation to the reiteration of performativity: “That this reiteration is necessary is a sign that materialization is never quite complete, that bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled. Indeed, it is the instabilities, the possibilities for rematerialization, opened up by this process that mark one domain in which the force of the regulatory law can be turned against itself to spawn rearticulations that call into question the hegemonic force of that very regulatory law”(1-2).

What Butler is indicating here is the normative but conditional force of regulative ideals and it is in those conditions that there is also room to amend the ideal by different practices. This is how, while insisting on consistency, it must be noted that Frankie was being consistent to an ideal that was somewhat fashioned by herself. I mean that actualizing the CR model is not making the company culture more virtuous in the sense of honesty, fairness and so on—which are the kinds of ideals some CR advocates would describe—involving ‘the right thing to do’ and other such human virtues. Rather Frankie’s choices represented a turn to making the workings of business—e.g. ‘customer satisfaction’—into values that the CR ideal should adopt and could espouse in later proselytizing. She talked about taking values “to a higher level,” thus changing the values that are usually offered, mimicked on values for humans. In other words, the model is not being made material as espoused and in actualizing the model in corporate culture, the model itself is re-presented with a slight skew.

As responsible company cultures get constructed their range—the extent of their power to cause change—are limited by their construction at that time. For instance, for all the air of openness and change about Frankie’s company as if embracing CR with abandon, still off limits at the time of the interview were specific targets on sales behavior. I asked how the values Frankie propounded affected the competitive behavior of the sales team because she had mentioned that they were trained on the values too. She said:

> [E]ven if there was a need to do something and it wasn’t done, I wouldn’t be able to intervene honestly. It’s not CR’s role to do that. It’s back to the governance in the organization. It’s for me as I said more to reflect that in as open and honest a way as possible which is why the report is key because I think and I’ve done it myself, you can pick up a CR report for any organization and you will get a feel for the organization straight away, no question about it, I would argue that about any CR report and people sometimes don’t realize that when they’re publishing it I would say – to get a feel for it straight away. You can see how it’s been structured. In fact I’ve got, I could tell if it’s constructed externally or internally at this stage because I can see if there’s a communications approach overlaying the whole thing.

She defended her inability to intervene in sales activity directly by pointing to an indirect intervention through the discipline of reporting what is being done. Making actions public will have their effect.

It is precisely that discipline that is pushing an expansion of the reach of CR. The model put into practice continues to change. As I write I have heard that Frankie has begun setting targets for the facilities manager, targets on environmental issues, rather than simply publishing what they supply her with. The report, doing CR, performing it, is eking an upstream reach. It is a step towards more active intervention, affecting not just processes but the objective of those processes, end-goals of the business. Making more information available to a wider circle becomes a constraint elsewhere, here on the former ‘inner circle.’

A final comment is worthwhile on the involvement of the concept of culture in all this and the anxiety to perform it. To put the situation from Frankie’s point of view she recognized that one does not have to view ‘culture’ as an origin nor as a spontaneous and timeless emergence from which the company practices then issue. Rather it was something to be intervened in. On the other hand, others not tuned into the possible interventions leave ‘culture’ to its own devices. For Frankie, practices must *prove* culture because in the case of the responsible company, at least from the perspective of stakeholders and critics, it will always be something to be perfected and hence created.

In a perfect example of how culture is an important locus of intervention, the UN rapporteur John Ruggie (2008) advised governments to take a role in fostering corporate cultures that demonstrate a respect for rights. One way of doing this is principles-based regulation that for instance requires the publication of a CR report. “Second, some States are beginning to use “corporate culture” in deciding corporate criminal accountability. They examine a company’s policies, rules and practices to determine criminal liability and punishment, rather than basing accountability on the individual acts of employees or officers... Both incentivize companies to have appropriate compliance systems” (10-11).

Corporate culture is an effort to create stability for the company that of course is never stable. The effort that CR is, to change capitalism from a zero sum game, to deny or neutralize the destructive side of capitalism and to enhance its creativity or its ability for society and companies to work collaboratively, exacerbates the anxiety to perform culture, to make it measurable through business values, which in part fuels the kind of creative destruction of corporate activities that Schumpeter meant when he talked about capitalism.

We can draw a further useful analogy between corporate culture—the performance and consistency of the right values—and what Luhmann calls ‘personality’ in his discussion of trust, that being “to constitute an ordered, not arbitrary, centre of a system of action, with which one can come to terms” (1979, 39). We have already mentioned the valuable effects of presenting the self as a social identity with which others feel they can engage trustingly. “Trust then is the generalised expectation that the other will handle his freedom, his disturbing potential for diverse action, in keeping with his personality – or, rather, in keeping with the personality which he has presented and made socially visible” (39).

Personality is thus something that Luhmann places at the centre of the ability to trust and to confer trust and those competences arise from being able to learn how to trust while also being able to extend and manage that ability with the other subjects around one, through communicative competence. At least two dimensions to this are worth mentioning. Firstly, as alluded to, there is a consciousness of oneself as a communicating entity. “He who stands by what he has allowed to be known about himself, whether consciously or unconsciously, is worthy of trust... Every actor is experienced by the others, not only as a causal process, by which causes are transformed into effects, but simultaneously (so as to extend some generalizing over this process) as a complex of symbols. And he senses this, knows the implications and expressive value of his every action and inaction, for the most part, much better than he knows their effects and so, more or less consciously, gauges his behaviour accordingly" (39).

Secondly, mastery of ones self-presentation symbolically or mastery of moving around this symbolic medium provides an "inner assurance which comes from being equal to the demands of self-presentation in all situations" (82) and is an "inner resource" of the foundation for readiness to trust. This mastery is productive in the following way:

> self-presentation is difficult, threatened by inner contradictions, mistakes, facts, and information which cannot also be presented: so on the one hand it requires considerable expressive prudence and, on the other hand, the tactful co-operation of the spectators. There often arise delicate or indeed embarrassing situations where it threatens to become obvious that the presented self is not the true self. Someone who then loses his self-control is lost…. A person who on the contrary, retains his composure can save himself in various ways: by giving the situation a humorous twist, by open admission, reinterpreting retrospectively his past self-presentation, by playing the matter down…" (82).

Furthermore, trusting oneself in this way usually means one is more inclined to bestow trust (82). If one is sure one's self-presentation is likely to remain intact, one is more inclined to trust. In other words, it is not about losing the self in conformity with the wishes of the truster but about maintaining boundaries on one's self presentation. The implications of all this are that in order to be trusted, one must first trust oneself through mastering symbolic self-presentation and only then can one be both trusted and trusting enough to trust in return or to play a part in a system of trust.

Hence if one equates what Luhmann says about 'personality' with Frankie's frustrations about other companies' corporate cultures, we have another way of interpreting why she has such difficulty with those cultures when they are not sharing information. By not doing so, by not "putting the best foot forward" and admitting shortcomings they are not known personalities or cultures, they are not masters of their symbolic competence and their distrust of others breeds distrust of them. But wider than that, by not playing along, they are jeopardizing Frankie's company's efforts to be trustworthy by reminding spectators of what companies are generally regarded as.

Furthermore, by not reciprocating Frankie's trusting extension of information, they are increasing the risks for her in communicating trustfully with them—putting the continuation of her own trustful communications at risk when she would rather maintain it for the sake of investors, rating agencies and other stakeholders, as companies in other jurisdictions are doing. The implication is that if a company must communicate trustingly with stakeholders, then it must be able to communicate just as trustingly with its peer companies too.

Having made the leap to communicate, her 'responsible' position is fragile – irresponsibility is always very close by. As Luhmann notes ""Above all, …not just in individual cases, but much more on the system level, trust depends on the inclination towards risk being kept under control and on the quota of disappointments not becoming too large" (89). Frankie's company has made a leap of trust from a position of distrust and now she needs the other corporate cultures to join her in order to continue to build CR as an added system that paradoxically is to reduce the complexity of the corporate environment.

Even though this section has been predominantly about internal challenges to adopt transparency or to become more collaboratively disposed and trustful within companies, the presence of *other* companies in Frankie's thinking and actions is significant. She adjusts to them and wishes for better from them while she evaluates them—a point I will come back to.

The CR Manager

Relatively speaking it was easy for Frankie to be more open at BFR network meetings because the company was already prepared, if not keen, to discuss this information—even though in the past in this sector it has been a “no-no” to publish say customer satisfaction ratings which were anonymized between companies. The range of previously taboo information that is now published is ever-expanding. It is as if in the past the focus was on what competitors might learn but less so now. Competitors are no longer just the ‘enemy’; something else is looming, be it the market, the future, risk—all the unknowns. In this arena, competitiveness is becoming less about out-competing someone in particular and more about being ready for anything. In other words, competition is changing as much as collaboration is a demand that’s felt. That, and all it entails, is a goal that companies are coming to recognize, or have crystallized in this network.

But with structural pressures for openness or transparency modeling company cultures, Freda drew my attention to an important if not essential complementary factor helping a company to revise its approach to sharing information—the CR manager. In this section, the CR manager is drawn into collaboration in an explicit sense and implicitly, or ‘competitively’ as companies judge the quality of each others’ performances of CR by the quality of who is in the job. As Freda described her own collaborations—meetings with her counterparts in her direct competitor companies where they talked through solutions and initiatives in great detail, she went on to highlight some limitations to sharing in the network. One, I have already referenced—how prepared the company is for talking in public—but “secondly there’s a piece around the ...personality, attitude and so on of the person who’s the CSR representative of the organization.” Freda described the type: they should not be the kind of person who is afraid of taking the risk, of going beyond company protocol.

Much of what I have said about trust, particularly in relation to personality, applies to individuals. To respond to Luhmann’s question about the role of personal trust when system trust seems so prevalent (45), I suggest that it is no coincidence that the trust Frankie showed in herself or the symbolic mastery that was evident in challenging her colleagues internally to produce their first CR report, seems to also catalyze trust beyond herself. It has called out trust in her organization in relation to CR and she was also now attempting to ‘infect’ other organizations with it through her growing self assurance in the role and her contact with the other CR managers. This disposition to personal trust was also true of Freda as we will see shortly.

Judging by her opinions of some of the CR managers she had met in her time Frankie herself intuited the importance of the person in the role. It tied back to what she had said about values being business values that perform the culture. It had seemed to me as we chatted that a responsible company entailed an attitudinal somersault like flipping a switch, from one of defense and siege, to one of relating, of opening the organization to acknowledging and drawing on its entanglements because the company or at least some powerful people within it, suddenly realized the organization’s dependence on everything around it. As a corollary it could only survive in that world if it operated according to certain new rules. The totality of this kind of thinking and its difference was captured when people talked about having to ‘get it’ or that they had gotten it, as if suddenly—not over time—all the pieces of the picture had slipped into place. All at once the pressures for transparency, consumer and investor demand, the past and future were visible—as well as all the potential paybacks and the actions.

But taking Frankie herself as an example, getting into this loop, getting into the kind of thinking that Frankie espoused would require a leap of faith, pegging organizational colors to the mast, re-aligning organizational practices accordingly and all through a special person in the CR function. Picking up on these threads I asked about the effort to get entire organizations to think differently.

> F: it's very hard. See I would judge businesses on this agenda on the nature and quality of the individual they give responsibility to
> E: for the role?
> F: for the role and I have been at some forums – now it's changed recently, at first I was saying well what's going on because ... I have spoken to people going back over a number of three or four years now who hadn't a clue what CR was about and they were in the role and I'm saying [they're thinking] 'Oh well I'm just responsible for community activities [giving money to local charities on an ad hoc basis for example]. That's CSR and that's fine.' But I don't want to be in a forum where there's somebody sitting there thinking all I'm doing is community. I'm going to change the world in community and that's all and because the organization is kind of saying 'Well you go off there now and do that.' I'm being a little bit cynical now [she continues mimicking]—'Well you go off there and do that now and you go to those meetings and you talk about community activities and that's fine and we'll just go on with the real business.' [laughing] There's been a fair bit of that… I think it's like professionalizing CR. You're either serious about it or you're not and I think that's where we lag the UK a bit. You wouldn't get away with it in some roles in the UK....[5]

From this telling, for Frankie the CR manager is just as much part of the performance of the company culture and its sincerity about CR but again in that deeper sense of performance that thrives on consistency. To draw on what Luhmann (1979) says about trust, an effort to engender trust will founder on the kinds of conformity that other CR managers are showing. "Whoever wants to win trust must take part in social life and be in a position to build the expectations of others into his own self-presentation. This is the basic rule. It must not, however, be confused with mere conformity – anything but! We have already seen that role-conformity offers little opportunity for the presentation of self. Anyone who merely conforms will not be seen as self at all, and therefore can be trusted as little as the person who hurries past" (62). They must show their symbolic mastery, their own personal boundaries and standards. If not, it is more likely that when questions are asked, they will be judged the source of distrust - not the corporate personality.

One can see for example how Frankie has learned to flex and strengthen her self-presentation consistently in the role, which importantly, fits her personal interests well. Indeed she seemed to have surprised herself by how well this CR role suited her and complemented if not exaggerated her own personal interests.

> My background wouldn't have naturally led me to this but it would have made me and this is something that I've debated with my own boss and he would agree with me and he would say actually that what you do in your CSR agenda ultimately if you have somebody with enough authority in the position – it's defined as much by the person in the position as it is by what the company wants to do. Okay so I've got a fair bit of influence on the shape of our CSR agenda and what we do so I'm passionate about the environment so by God so that's why I spent three weeks analysing data. I mean very few people would have done that but I was determined I was going to get something out about the environment because I feel passionate about it – the same with [another topic], passionate about that and I'm getting the [organisation] to spend money. They wouldn't be spending it otherwise. Now with somebody else in the role, they might have said 'Oh, not really too exercised about that.' So the individual in the role has a lot of influence I would argue, on your attitude and approach to CSR. So if I wasn't, if I moved out of this role and somebody else came in, it would definitely change.

The role seemed like fertile ground for her personal interests but when I asked if her involvement in CR activities had changed her attitude to the workplace for her personally or whether she now saw companies differently, it seemed clear that her enhanced personal interests through work was something she could bring back to bear on her job too. This job and her personal interests were mutually reinforcing and seemed to make her a conduit penetrating former company boundaries.

It's been a huge eye-opener for me because and this is what I would argue

> internally. I have a 50 50 inward outward focus whereas before I would have been 100 inward focus and I can see people now who have 100 inward focus and I can see them differently and I can see the people who have an outward focus as well within the organization and I'm sure the same applies to all organizations... there's a huge value in going outside the organization and seeing the outside view looking in and also seeing the other constituencies, whether its government or community and what they do and it's a whole different world out there. It's unbelievable like I'm doing my community work because it's evolved from my activities in here.... it certainly gives, well it's given me a greater sense of the contribution I can make in other ways apart from—well what it actually does is it gives you a better sense of your overall contribution and eventually makes you realise that you can contribute differently internally as well so it changes your perspective on your own job.... Your mind works differently but also it develops creative instincts, creative abilities, because I have creative, I'm coming up with ideas all the time externally and it makes you think well I could do the same inside so it's quite unusual actually... When you go out there you see all the things that people are doing and it's a much richer landscape but it's useful for me in my job as well because I can see the impact more differently [in relation to] what we're doing.

But such a CR manager, with guts and ambition, with personal passions, with an expanding outward focus and who could only be so well chosen by senior management with serious intentions, is not all that a CR manager contributes to these dynamics of exposing / expanding entanglements. They are themselves an important connector between their company and other companies—be they suppliers or even direct competitors. When I explored with Freda what else enabled her to collaborate so well with her direct competitors in the BFR network she added another factor—not just emphasizing her own dispositions to action, her assessment of herself as a co-operative person, but dwelling on what those other companies helped her to do in her situation—a situation that she surprisingly called "loneliness".

> There's a certain loneliness around being a CSR manager [...] in an organization. Maybe loneliness isn't quite the word because it's not lonely but it can be, it can be a position that feels sometimes as though you're setting an agenda that nobody else quite gets or … that other people get but they're not as clear about what it means to the business as you are yourself and you're constantly trying to network within your own organization to help move people's, move people's thinking and attitudes so it can feel sometimes a little bit as though you're ploughing a single

> path in the organization [... T]hat's why I think people have a more cooperative relationship because at the end of the day they've shared goals and the goals may differ slightly in every organization but there are so many similarities in the obstacles people have to achieve...and the [BFR] network helps them, people to discuss that.

The need for support to overcome the isolation of her role—derived from the newness of this arena and her internal challenges—made collaboration between CR managers an option. Her account reminds me of Durkheim's (1997) introduction to the second edition of the Division of Labor in Society– about corporative groups and how people join together to form one because of shared interests and sentiments (xlii-xliii). He asserts that professional groupings in particular form a morality of their own and give new life to individuals—an ability from the past, now a possibility that he extends to corporations (lii – liii). Such groupings are in the interests of society and if the binding power of the corporative organization is as strong and necessary as Durkheim has suggested (lv), then being rejected by it as Freda describes understandably lends one to seek out others and to form a corporative organization (in the substantive sense) of their own. With a job description that takes her into the corporate unknown the basis for taking a leap of faith in trusting one's usually-out-of-bounds counterparts in other companies is strong. It is the lesser of two risks.

Freda said more about the specialness of that relationship between CR managers. She made a distinction between how she shares *outside* the BFR network where she is *more* careful about sharing information, particularly in "talking in too much depth about our long-term strategy because there would be, you might not want to open up the gateway to others in order to learn oh [that company] has this in the pipeline and the opportunity then to piggyback on something for one of our competitors would be there."

Being worried about competitors outside the network but collaborating with competitors inside it suggested a special relation between CR managers, a bond from their common challenges and from the exchange of information. Hence doing what she feared 'outsiders' would do – i.e. piggy back on their long-term strategy—is less likely, would be more anti-social, less in keeping with their bonds – perhaps I might speculate, less in keeping with the gift and obligations of trust.

As such, Freda's collaboration was itself a distinction from collaborations that she could have with other CR managers. The point of this collaboration is somehow, to outcompete or differentiate her company from others while assisting competitors to understand the tactics for the new game at hand.

Other Companies

But along with calls for transparency, an able CR manager internally, and other managers who support them, other companies also work another way to help each other address these agendas—that is through a kind of peer pressure that I see as acknowledging the oblique entanglements between companies. It is a force that has been more and less explicit throughout this chapter. Several interviewees declared that the only reason their company appointed a CR manager or became interested in CR at all was because other companies that they would rate as peers, had made a move. Mimesis was a force for similarity (DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

However if anything for Frankie, this jostling between companies did not go far enough. On the point of how few CR reports were being published in Ireland, Frankie pointed to the UK saying that "You wouldn't get away with [not publishing a CR report] in the UK because you'd have so many peer organizations who would be doing it" but in

Ireland, because of their scale, because so few peers were doing it "it's not affecting their reputation by not doing it. They're not seeing, [any] impact on reputation."

Frankie wanted more from competition, more of the contributory dynamic of this oblique entanglement and its implied collaborative wish. I asked Frankie why she bothered publishing a report if no one else is too bothered. "Why bother?" she repeated.

> Because we made a conscious decision three years ago to take a lead in this arena because we feel that it's good in the long term for our business and we feel that it differentiates us from our competitors and the more time they spend not producing CR reports I just say great even though I've encouraged them to do so and I will encourage them to do so because it helps me to position us in terms of what we're doing. I can use that as levers to say well why aren't we, can't we do this and do that so it's not necessarily... - other companies, the couple that I've spoken to, don't understand my position on this when I say it'd be good if you produced a CR report, they say 'Why?' But they see the world differently, they see the world ultimately as it's all competitive and I'm thinking maybe not.

Frankie is critical of the interpretation here of 'competitive' that seems to indicate 'insular', falling for that fallacy that every company is an island or that it does what it does without consideration for anything around it, as if that alone is what it means to compete. Frankie suggests that that is the wrong way of considering how companies compete or how they relate to one another.

Rather, Frankie and Freda were describing (Frankie was espousing) how collaboration and competition are complementary, spurring one another on. Contrary to the description of competition intimated by Deutsch (1949) where a competitive social situation is one in which a person's attainment of his or her goal prohibits or diminishes similar attainment by others (131-132), in none of these cases did competition thwart the other companies' efforts. Rather the situation was more in keeping with Deutsch's description of cooperation: one in which a person can attain his or her goal if, and only if, others do as well (ibid)[6].

In this context it was an awareness of competitors and the possibility of bringing them along to the same level that provided the opportunity for a kind of oblique gift. Giving the others advice to compete set up the anticipation of a returned benefit: Frankie indicated that without other companies' matching efforts Frankie's own work would have less value. This was not to win by comparison to failures. If other companies would move ahead, they would help her by providing internal levers to move her own company's agenda along.

Frankie felt they were all competing for something but instead of addressing market strategies directly oriented to sales, and instead of the clarity of rational sequential moves that co-opetion suggests, the collaborations / competition between BFR network members was spurring companies to be different *kinds* of companies with positive effects on all they were connected with and ultimately with the society they were *co-producing*. They were assured this should have an effect on sales.

Outside the world of CR advocates, the value of competing to be different companies with the goal of co-producing a better society was not an entirely successful argument yet. Instead, competition was typically rendered just as the process by which companies were able to sell more products. As one might expect—because the industrial organization strand of economics is the framework within which they work—competition authorities judge firm behavior exactly that way. So for example, not dismissing the likely power of corporate responsibility to dictate market share and pricing power, one agent in the Irish Competition Authority agreed that corporate responsibility would certainly be located within a broad marketing mix addressing dimensions such as price, product qualities and retailing techniques. These mixtures of qualities to create difference would determine who would achieve higher sales. As he noted “for the economic assessment of markets and firms’ behavior, profit maximization is the most empirically valid method of explaining firm behavior. In competitive markets, product differentiation is often used to attain profit maximisation.” A CR advocate might say that such a framework misses their point, or that it presents competition in such a way that change in company ethos *only* affects outcomes for the company and not also outcomes for all with whom it is connected. They would apply a different way of approaching company competition. Rather from their point of view, the import of CR and the changes it works were precisely an attempt to create a new “end”, one *balancing* economy with ‘quality’ writ large, one where changed companies change their surroundings too.

Its rhetoric has a foundational mandate. In a 2008 interview (Fiedler 2008) EU Commissioner for Enterprise and Industry Günter Verheugen asserted, “responsible and sustainable business practices are crucial to the legitimacy of the market economy in the eyes of our citizens” (15). He predicted that recent trends in CSR “will increasingly lead to a situation in which the best companies in CSR will also be the best in terms of shareholder *value*”(13, emphasis added), balancing “competitiveness with social and environmental sustainability”(15). It seems that two paths to value were being contested, one focused solely on profit, the other on value including profit but according a greater proportion to qualities – quality of life, quality of planet, quality of economies—setting the terms for the future. The argument gets to the nub of the broad debate about contemporary capitalism embraced by CR advocates, the extent to which monetary return and a broader definition of value can be merged in one.

In every EU policy document on CR (Commission of the European Communities

2001; 2006), at the kernel of making these changes are transparency and collaborative networks, supporting the development of CR. From the accounts, it would seem that indeed collaborative / competitive negotiations are tied to a fundamental resetting especially because the competition for transparency brings collaboration to explain what they mean by transparency and making it worth vying for. Out of the productive tension of collaboration / competition these companies seemed to be moving to a different register of collaboration / competition. Schumpeter hinted at something just this subtle.

So it seems important to think of CR not *just* as a proxy to how collaboration and competition are negotiated. It seems no coincidence that greater entanglement is what CR advocates and networks wanted and that this is what these corporate executives were trying to outdo each other for. The crucible of sorting out what doing corporate responsibility means, how that puts unusual demands on personnel, company processes, cultures and aspirations, necessarily increased or exposed the entanglements offered by companies and between companies. Competition viewed through this arena looked messy. It is thus understandable that another observer in this arena wondered, like I did, about how CR was “reframing competitiveness.”

However at stake for Frankie was whether this would be a new competitive arena in the sense that she hoped it would be—i.e. where her company could be differentiated from the others in the long run. As she talked she conjured the idea of companies moving to a different register. CR advocates would mean such a register should make companies less ‘capitalist’ in the sense that their capitalism should no longer be so destructive and rather, have positive impact only. A company that shares in this CR network should be an organization with a different outlook, as well as having different policies, practices and measurements for how it relates to its community, its workforce, the marketplace and the physical environment.

Frankie saw the potential for positive impacts and was using positively framed transparency but companies would still have to be different from each other even if it was in a different way—in terms of how the company would do its business, the ethos of the company. In order to get to that next register, in order to make that difference, just as much as Freda needed her solidarity group, Frankie had to give others a hint of the game at hand, a tip-off. For all the reasons of competing for transparency, responding to stakeholder demands and moving to a new register, but mostly, to make this game playable, the others should also join in. They should also report.

A view of the pressure to connect, to bring everyone along, between competitors and between companies and their environments was arguably scalable to relations between nations as market players and such a view also put into relief a dispersed force, with the sheen of 'right' that was also operative on these companies. Throughout this paper there are small but envious references to UK companies who seemed to have this CR issue figured out, as if they were well practiced at thinking in the long-term. Their's is the example which Frankie had in her sights. Their excellence was making her work harder at also being excellent. Her envy was that of a novice: for Irish companies and business people, experts at gloom, the Celtic Tiger was the first time through such a dramatic cycle of boom and bust (in 2008). With the coming and going of the Celtic Tiger, Ireland has had its first encounter with the robber-barons and the need for reform.

Ireland's late-coming and the undeniability of being entangled even as a nation, was never so obvious to me as when reading what unfolded during and after John

Maynard Keynes (1933) came to Dublin in 1933 to indirectly talk the newly independent (1922) Irish free state out of a protectionist economic policy. Keynes gave a jaded account of capitalism, full of ambivalence about British experiences with its by then international reach. Parading the Ricardian justification for international trade he talked about the division of labor in manufacturing that exchange between nations made possible.

At least that had been the ideal. It is easier now in the 2000's for this Irish person to understand Keynes' disappointment with what he had actually witnessed—how capitalism wasn't delivering the goods. "The decadent international but individualistic capitalism, in the hands of which we found ourselves after the war, is not a success. It is not intelligent, it is not beautiful, it is not just, it is not virtuous; - and it doesn't deliver the goods. In short we dislike it and we are beginning to despise it" (183). He pinpointed in particular the nub of the issue as the new geographic distance between shareholder and management and how it provided for one to be "irresponsible towards what I own and those who operate what I own are irresponsible towards me" (180). Nearly 80 years ago he was already identifying the issue that these CR advocates in Ireland and elsewhere were more recently confronting and that should be solved by acknowledging responsibilities, acknowledging entanglements.

The Irish government ignored Keynes advice (and even construed his advice to the contrary). Or perhaps Keynes advice wasn't well delivered; he understood why Ireland would shun entanglements with other nations seeing as it was still predominantly a pastoral economy with no substantial industrial basis to counter an influx of foreign manufactures. Ireland occupied the classic colonial position of supplying raw materials to the powerhouses of Europe. However, though Keynes also cautioned that Ireland's size and its relatively miniscule population of three million might not be sufficient to foster a self-sufficient market, subsequent Irish experiments in market freedom (oriented to the past and the 100-year old preaching of Irish nationalists and what they wouldn't do to build up her economy and her people when Ireland was free) seem to have assumed that market 'freedom' meant Ireland really didn't have to play with the big boys if it didn't want to. Ireland tried to pursue protectionism for nearly 30 years.

However the strength of the rhetoric of free trade was striking. It seemed not to be just about nations and economies but whether or not one embraced it seemed to reach into people's souls and the kinds of futures they could have. Even Keynes himself, as if waking from a dream, remembered how he had been raised to see free trade "as a part of the moral law" (177).

Within Ireland's borders, Irish literary circles were persuaded by the necessity of international entanglements. Along with economic protectionism, during World War Two, Ireland maintained a neutrality that began for pragmatic reasons but that took on a moral 'righteousness' that echoed the heavy censorship on publishing and media that was deployed in parallel. It seemed to Irish writer Sean O'Faolain that "censorship was yet another strategy by large segments of Gaelic and Catholic forces determined to build walls between Ireland—which they imagined as a Gaelic, Catholic, rural paradise—and the outside, industrial, materialistic world. Though O'Faolain approved of Ireland's neutrality in World War II as a demonstration of national sovereignty, he was no isolationist. He insisted that his country was part of one world and that Ireland should not, and could not, avoid cultural, social, and economic contacts with other countries"

(McCaffrey 2005, 151).

Take the following passages which capture O'Faolain's sentiments very well. In 1943, O'Faolain noted, "two words which have probably had the greatest influence on Irish lives during the last forty years" (1943, 423) -- Sinn Féin, the party name for the architects of independence. "[I]n their day they were inspiring words. They meant then a creative gospel: they asked Ireland to think originally, not to be imitative, to be self-proud and self-dependent. That was what we took then from their literal meaning—Ourselves Alone. But something seems to have happened to their inspiration which we had not foreseen in the days of their glowing youth. Imperceptibly those two words have been squinted into meaning Ourselves All Alone. Self-reliance has taken on the astonishing implication of estrangement from the world" (423).

Capturing the sentiments, he summarizes: "The world is wicked: we are good. The world will contaminate us: we must keep out of the world. The whole mental outlook of our neo-puritans and neo-nationalists is of that order, and all their efforts are correspondingly directed towards protecting us by insulation and isolation. The peculiar statements of some of our Senators quoted last month in our *Mise Eire* [I am Ireland] section were along these lines. It is a sad declension from the gospel of self-reliance if any of our people really do place so little reliance on themselves as to want to retire to a funk-hole from the traffic of ideas" (424). He argued that we should know better from history where "[w]henever we failed to be internationally-minded we became weak, and our defences fell. Our worst period (barring the 18th century) was from about 1350 to 1550 when we sank into a stupefied insularity, lost touch with world-movements, and were therefore unable to orientate ourselves to them when they burst unexpectedly upon us in the great 16th century Tudor thrust for *lebensraum*" (424: original emphasis).

However he understood the tendency. Referring to the Irish nation's relative youth in 1943, he noted: "Every ambitious youth has felt the urge to complete independence: but before he realizes what he is experiencing is the limitations on human independence. Economic pressure, stubborn resistance, greater pressure, greater resistance culminate not so much in an acknowledgement that in this world we are all bound together as in an angry and hurt withdrawal into a greater and still greater seclusion" (424).

"[I]t does not happen quite that way with nations. To be sure, we all know the self-made man: but the phrase invariably means the half-made man, and the sons who see what he has missed, and are not so proud of Father as Father is of himself, and there are phrases that slightingly measure the halfness of his achievement... What they have missed is that priceless intercourse with various humanity, and all that it produces, without which any man is less than wholly civilized... But the whole history of the world, as we all know, is, in fact, one long persistent interchange" (425). We should in other words benefit from competing / collaborating. Such interchanges are to participate in the circle of mature nations and mature peoples.

Eventually the overall failure of Irish economic experiments, the comparative excellence of other economies and internal critiques, resigned the Irish government of the late 1950s that the country had no freedom but to play directly with other national economies. It is indeed proving to be a 'big boys' game.

Just as Ireland is learning that it cannot escape the collaboration / competition of international trade, the corporate freedom to mould a new game of competition in isolation seems illusory. As CR becomes a mechanism in the negotiation of the tension at the heart of liberalism, for companies the dual pressures to greater 'freedom' and yet their own need to 'manage' or make these freedoms do-able, or here 'playable,' converge on or bind companies themselves.

NOTES

[1] For elaboration on the benefits of corporate responsibility to business, including activities with suppliers and customers see Creyer and Ross Jr. 1997; Googins, Mirvis, and Rochlin 2007; Porter and Kramer 2002; 2006; Waddock and Graves 1997.

[2] Of course Adam Smith disapproved of how people of the same trade could not meet without conspiring against the public (Smith 2009, 76).

[3] There are other venues in which companies will collaborate such as on trade associations or on working groups towards new standards. However rarely do such collaborations set a challenge for one another to be more transparent within the room *and* outside the room with all stakeholders unless it falls within the remit of the corporate sustainability or responsibility agenda. (cf. The "Responsible Care" initiative of the global chemical industry on www.ica-chem.org). See also the commentary by Schoenberger in Benson and Kirsch 2010, 479 in relation to the possibilities opened by 'channelling' competition in particular ways.

[4] Co-Opetition (Brandenburger and Nalebuff 1997) is a game theory for business, directing their strategic thinking to the possibility of reframing other companies as 'complementors'--companies whose product in the market makes customers value your products more. Think McDonalds and Heinz Ketchup or less obviously, Rice University and Rice Village. Both are creating a bigger market for burgers and for education respectively. Following the initial volume, a burgeoning literature on Co-Opetition explained all the possible moves that companies can make—how they could follow certain rules in terms of contracts with customers and suppliers, rules for the mass-market and for government. They also enumerated some price related tactics–and all to capture a market, to win over customers. However, instead of addressing market strategies directly oriented to sales, and instead of the clarity of rational sequential moves that Co-opetion suggests, the interactions between BFR network members was spurred by what companies had to change in their own processes in order to be different *kinds* of companies. It was not a question of choice for these companies to capture market share but first and foremost a matter of responding to environmental conditions that demanded a response.

[5] Cyert and March's (1992) idea of "organizational slack" where an organization responds to environmental uncertainty by creating more capacity than is needed, might explain these CR managers who seem to be just fulfilling a role (42-43).

[6] Deutsch puts these descriptions of competition and collaboration in terms of two types of goal interdependence, hence acknowledging that goals are often interdependent: "positive (where the goals are linked in such a way that the amount or probability of a person's goal attainment is positively correlated with the amount or probability of another obtaining his goal) and negative (where goals are linked in such a way that the amount or probability of goal attainment is negatively correlated with the amount or probability of the other's goal attainment). To put it colloquially, if you're positively linked with another, then you sink or swim together; with negative linkage, if the other sinks, you swim, and if the other swims, you sink" (Deutsch, Coleman, and Marcus 2006, 24).

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have shown how the biopolitics (Foucault 1988 [1976], 139) of corporate responsibility (or CR) and sustainability was rendered—by CR advocates and interested companies—as an ethical ecology, not dissociated from the biopolitical but rooted in it.

Ethical Ecology

By ‘ecology’ I was referring to the growing consciousness and deliberate cultivation of the interconnections, dependencies and feedback as well as responsibilities between heretofore discreet parts of the social landscape—between business and employees for example.

These nascent interconnections—between what we might think of as systems and their environment—which were themselves becoming compulsory, were also being presented as compelling ethical striving and to an extent, facilitating it. Importantly this effort was to be directed towards what was coming to be understood by the terms ‘sustainability’ and ‘responsible business.’ Hence, I also used the word ‘ecology’ in the sense of how this argument for ethics had roots in concern for the planet itself and for the very survival of the human race.

In a deeper sense then, the matrix or the features of biopower today—“[1] one or more truth discourses about the ‘vital’ character of living human beings; [2] an array of authorities considered competent to speak that truth; [3] strategies for intervention upon collective existence in the name of life and health; [4] and modes of subjectification, in which individuals work on themselves in the name of individual or collective life or health" (Rabinow and Rose 2006, 195)—permeate this concern with sustainability (the ecology or the engagement of systems and environments in the name of '*life*' as such) and certainly as it is rendered in this arena of business and all that surrounds it, sustainability weighs heavily on ethical quest or government of the self for its potential for success.

Furthermore, these logics could be extended into the less biological concern with the sustainability of our *ways* of life—including economies and communities; wrapped around vital human bodies, they too were at risk but even more dependent on changed dispositions to action.

Negotiating the Liberal

In the landscape between companies and the amorphous idea of stakeholders, the increasing emphasis on governance of the self was enmeshed with questions of the governance of others. As company executives were coming (and being brought) to consider their environment (in relation to life or to ways of life), the increasing responsibilities of business and of those in their immediate environment raised new questions for power relations or for the governance of others and of the self.

Every chapter is to do with how the discreet systems that constitute 'business' are reflecting on their relationship with what is thought *not* to be business. That is in turn effecting internal changes within business and among those working for business and creating an impetus for the negotiation of new but nonetheless *selective* engagements among these and other so-called stakeholders—such as environmental representatives and community representatives.

The engagements are selective because this is very much a liberal landscape. These activities, caught up in ecologies that wanted companies and people to have a 'better' disposition to action towards the collective good, were always negotiating the fine line implied in the liberal concern with "governing too much."

In neoliberalism, one part of the response to governing too much is an emphasis on the self, governing the self. But in this domain of corporate responsibility and sustainability this governance of the self was also to be the channel for the maintenance of the species body and its ways of life. Hence the body was the focus of wishes by others that also sometimes encountered or tapped into one's self formation. What does 'freedom' and self-governance mean in this domain?

In most cases, CR advocates were endorsing an extension or a cultivation of dependencies that entailed constraints but some in ways that were also working in support of what might be classed as freedoms or delimited from them (for example, how one chooses to respond to environmental concerns or employees' ability to take care of life while at work).

Hence, while involvement in wider social responsibilities—in these freedoms that were still freedoms—was to the benefit of business it was not a one-sided affair. Each chapter shows how those with whom business engaged had their own interests and wielded their own power that conditioned the engagement with business and with the forms in which sustainability would be manifest.

The Chapters

In Chapter 1 the force of the role of humans in changing the environment and the attendant risk to human life—from the biological to the social—was coming to be felt by companies and individuals alike. The solution—everyone's 'sustainability'—was being localised in changing people's relationships with one another and in changing corporate practices as they related to the environment. Numbers were central to measuring these changes and thus governing the issue.

However while employees and others were enlisted in what looked like a very successful production and consumption or use of company numbers describing the environment (in order to also produce new and better numbers successfully) I show how the alignment was not necessarily an 'enrolment' of persons by companies. Individual ethics of environment were quite active but responding to diverse and subjective concerns within the broad gambit of 'concern for the environment' that were very much rooted in biopolitical concerns. At times self-governance was aligned with company programmes, particularly where companies were providing the kinds of routines that ethical work, towards a subject more fitting to this environment, could use.

In Chapter 2, which described what amounted to responsible and sustainable practices in the workplace, acknowledging and working out the meaning of dependencies between worker and business were important for the longevity of the business (and for the longevity of the worker as a body and as a social being). However if that dependency was to have any substance or legitimacy, how work and life should be *separated* also had to be worked out. Work should now be a place where workers could take responsibility for social and personal dimensions of life which was only achievable in a site that was responsible to those needs. This was captured in the phrase 'work-life balance' and it was a balancing effort in more ways than one.

For example, workplace responsibility to the need for social and personal responsibilities among workers included promoting healthy bodies that were scalable from the person to their lives outside work, to the world *and* to the *economy*. The social relations of wellness were explicitly moralized and connected to positive *emotions* that would infect others with positivity and innovation. A further freedom to do other things at work, beyond taking care of one's health, was the donation of working time, paid or otherwise, to social causes.

But built into those dependencies about the quality of working life were also limits that the company and employees agreed, to do with how work time was structured (though not the amount of work time) which employees learned to vocalise and adopt as a disposition to action and push back through company ecologies—to headquarters, to government—and into their lives.

All of these steps were designed to release and tap into a latency for life among people-as-employees. The point was that as employees gained, so would companies, the world and economies. However these steps made for a thicker solidarity (thin solidarity only focussed on money) that could also be capitalised on by unions who thrust companies deeper into ecologies of the good by demanding that they live up to their new responsibilities.

In sum, governing workers with a view to the longevity of the business and of employees and doing so through workers, required new truths and strategies for intervention. These legitimised respect for employee freedoms while taking care of their bodies and social wellbeing by facilitating improved dispositions to that kind of action.

As we move through the chapters the concern with fostering sheer life (while respecting freedoms) comes to envelope other issues that together become the interlinked and forceful imperative for / driver of ethical change. In the problematic that was being established between the biology of humans and their environment, the solution was still to be found in subjects who cultivated different dispositions to action. The force of this triad in addressing the environment, the circular, reinforcing logic between environment, sustainability (of humans) and ethics was conceived of as applicable to other problems—such as community welfare and the marketplace. This move simultaneously extended the meaning of environment (to our ‘ways of life’) and of sustainability (to ‘better quality’) and opens all kinds of ‘ordinary’ subject positions to ethical change in relation to the workplace, community and marketplace, involving them in negotiating what ‘better quality ways of life’ could mean.

For example this subtle movement in emphasis from zoë (or life) to bios (or ways of life) while still including its growing emphasis on ethics was clear when it came to describing the governance of community and the impetus to involve companies in that in the name of sustainability—their own and that of the community group—towards *everyone’s* economic and social wellbeing (Chapter 3). Zoë was implicit in this bios that was also an ecology focussed on ethics. In the dance around the word ‘strategic’ that I discuss, the heretofore exclusive sectors of business and ‘community’ were being introduced to one another within limits where community groups exercised their own power and companies’ limitations were also laid bare. In the midst of it all—individuals as employees and as community activists—were exposed to threats of various kinds of demise as motivation to change their disposition to action towards the betterment of everyone's quality of (community) life.

The entailment of bios and ethics in 'sustainability' was even clearer in the negotiation of what responsibility and sustainability in the marketplace should mean (Chapter 4). In one dimension, in a hostile Environment, companies were negotiating their freedoms against governance of them by regulators, observers and by other companies. The concept of competition, that prime 'independent' disposition to action of companies, was muddied as cooperation among competitors—obliquely or otherwise—also became necessary in order to embrace this increasingly profit-relevant effort to demonstrate responsibility. The truth promoted by CR advocates was that demonstrating responsibility was key to the company's longevity which in turn, was closely tied to the longevity of our (quality) ways of life. To stay market and profit-relevant competitors needed to become more transparent but that precise competition implied a certain level of cooperation with competitors. As they participated in the 'race to transparency,' corporate executives were confronted by and embracing their own self-governance as corporate executives while they sought to govern their companies--and companies each other—along this path. Ultimately, setting out to change for self-interested ends, made a changed self part of the means to that end.

Business as a Global Force

One cannot be naïve about corporate power and the concerns are well documented by anthropologists (cf. Bakan 2005; Benson and Kirsch 2009; 2010; Rajak 2011; Welker, Partridge, and Hardin 2011) in relation to how corporations might shape everyday existence (Welker, Partridge, and Hardin 2011, S4); generate spectacular harm and goods that touch everything from our bodies (Petryna 2002; Petryna, Lakoff, and Kleinman 2006; Rabinow 1996); to our working lives (Garsten and Jacobsson 2004; Nash 1998); and to our communities (Nash 1992; Roethlisberger 1939).

Accounts focused on corporate harm however tend to reify the actual exchanges and the real people that constitute the ‘friction’ of capitalism (Tsing 2005) behind ‘the corporation,’ and its specificity and its instability.

As Welker, Partridge, and Hardin (2011) note: “an exclusive focus on the negative aspects of these institutions undermines our ability to understand and even challenge corporate life writ large” (S7) and it potentially misses Foucault’s (1991) important point that people are not governed simply by force or repression (Welker, Partridge, and Hardin 2011, S11) or perhaps how “[c]orporate forms are also being engaged to oppose the conventional ways in which large corporations are supposed to operate” (S12).

As Li (2007) suggests “the rush to identify hidden motives of profit or domination narrows analysis unnecessarily, making much of what happens ... obscure” (9). Furthermore, in relation to expert knowledge, she notes the “moments when the targets of expert schemes reveal, in word or deed, their own critical analysis of the problems that confront them” (11).

Many of the issues of corporate harm are fundamentally questions of the relationship between morals and economics—generally thought to be antithetical, a zero sum game—and it is a question into which CSR and sustainability insert themselves as solutions, as ways to blend both interests in what one of my interlocutors called the 'win-wins' or to make doing business and good moral outcomes synonymous. The familiar questions arise: should such practices "be seen as genuine efforts at transformation or as palliative gestures to critics while business carries on as usual" (Welker, Partridge, and Hardin 2011, S10)?

In response, I join Welker et al. to urge continued "attention to where [CSR] programs are housed, their funding streams, whether they are treated as cost centers rather than profit centers, how personnel are assigned and removed, what external actors are involved, and so forth" (S11) with attentiveness to the arguments, the exchanges and the actual negotiations that take place between actors.

In that view, the interaction becomes less about corporate *effect* than a continual negotiation between the corporate form, the people that make it up and those with whom they interact in the name of the corporation. This is to the extent that one might even contemplate their *co-production*, (cf. Sunder Rajan 2006) albeit in limited and unpredictable ways.

There exists tentative explorations of the diversity within corporate forms in terms of legal structure, ownership, purpose, effect as well as what cultural and global forms arise out of its articulations and relations (cf. Welker, Partridge, and Hardin 2011). There are contemporary twists that note the fragmentation of socio-economic groups such as the state, the economy and civil society (Lash and Urry 1987; Offe and Keane 1985) and that discuss corporations, market forms and actors in terms of the formation of the New Economy (Fisher and Downey 2006), Global Assemblages (Ong and Collier 2005) and the polity of the City of Gold (Westbrook 2004).

My own interest is in the biopolitical iteration of governmentality, that lends itself to critique by exploring the 'how' of corporations where power relations and power exchanges in all their subtleties are operative and converging on the human body in its vitality and in its need to be managed.

An approach to governmentality must focus where possible on the business people who are caught in more and less overt forms of government by others and by other institutions, and on how the processes that business is said to be founded on—such as competition or strategy—might be the very processes that in being renegotiated, offer locations for resistance (cf. Schoenberger commentary in Benson and Kirsch 2010, 479; Schumpeter 1987).

What I have tried to show in this dissertation is how corporations are also shaped by other social institutions and actors—and particularly the room for anarchy within ethics—the degree to which ethics might 'play along' with corporate goals but also the degree to which ethical formation retains its own logics.

Talking to the actors involved within corporations, tracking their strivings, their efforts to articulate new truths, new expertise, and new strategies of intervention converging on the vitality of human life, allows us to see the constraints as well as the openings for action.

As one interlocutor at the Corporate Forms Symposium (Welker, Partridge, and Hardin 2011) pointed out "What's available to me is the corporate form. I want to use that form to do something new and different. To use what is to make what should be" (S9).

Conclusion

Large questions loom in the concern with sustainability. Several of my interlocutors were keen that the actions of the units called ‘individuals’ were scalable to sustainability at the level of companies, economies, nations and the world but on a theoretical level, how does the concern with sustainability scale to indicators about the trajectory of modernity and its master narrative of progress?

The answer is not clear. On the one hand, I am reminded of Georgio Agamben (1998) who describes *homo sacer*—the figure who cannot be sacrificed but who may be killed with impunity. Bare life is not zoë or ‘life’ as such but rather it is life that has been ‘processed,’ politicised in decisions as to what or who may not be sacrificed but killed with impunity.

Already, in biopolitics, Agamben suggests that “bare life is no longer confined to a particular place or a definite category. It now dwells in the biological body of every living being” (L1543) and where the sovereign only could decide on sacred or bare life now doctors, priests and experts are capable of doing so.

In a way, in the politics of sustainability, one might speculate that we are all being invited to decide who may be killed with impunity and not in any socially sanctionable or ritualistic way. There is a risk—tied, ironically, to how the threat to zoe (the species) and the bios (civilization) of ‘everyone’ are being marshalled together behind actions—that we will ultimately be brought to a decision about how *some* of that all-inclusive term 'everyone' will be made homo sacer, or will be assigned as the living dead. One might further speculate as to the beginnings of that already in climate change negotiations where the developing world (ironically, in this idiom the insufficiently dependent on fossil fuels) were being offered the poorer deal in climate change negotiations when they are likely to suffer the worst climatic consequences. The collective term for the 'human race' may be lending itself to very dastardly ends.

Bearing this dark potential in mind, but even in its everyday usage, sustainability is a much less optimistic concept than infinite progress. It holds a barely contained threat of a real end that is only 50 years away by some accounts. As it is, if one thinks of the Occupy protests and others, it seems invalid to even consider ‘progress’ as the dominant metaphor for the present. Somehow it has been tarnished. One might speculate that ‘sustainability’ is the new word for 'tarnished progress'. So to provide a contrasting second response to my own question, sustainability may also serve to reintroduce some of the threat necessary for an investment in change.

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